

Reformed Capitalism Through Radical
Ecology in *New York 2140* by Kim
Stanley Robinson

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Abstract:

While eco-fiction has found a vast audience in contemporary literature reception, it is oftentimes 'sidelined' as a genre that is not taken seriously due to its dystopian world depictions and 'improbable' happenings (Ghosh 11). Nonetheless, I argue that 'improbability' is not an issue for Kim Stanley Robinson's *New York 2140* (2017) as it represents the perpetuation of twenty-first-century patterns of behavior over the years, magnified by the year 2140 by menacing rising waters that submerge downtown Manhattan. Further, it is my contention that this novel represents a reformation of the capitalist system rather than its eradication since it portrays a diverse cast of characters slowly realizing that the elitist capitalist system is threatening their lives as it only sustains profit, and it depicts the transformation of such a capitalist system into a capitalism that resembles a welfare state with progressive taxation and active citizen involvement. This thesis analyses more specifically the role of community engagement, finance restructuring, and eco-sensitivity awareness as aspects that Robinson deems essential for a reformation of a capitalist system. Moreover, I ground my claim that this shift towards a reformed capitalism follows Merchant's concept 'radical ecology:' "the cutting edge of social ecology [since] it pushes social and ecological systems towards new patterns of production, reproduction and consciousness that will improve the quality of human life and the natural environment" (*Radical* 9). In terms of methodology, this thesis lies at the intersection of three movements – ecocriticism, blue humanities, and social ecology – as they all are part of the narrative world of *New York 2140*. In the analysis here provided, the subthemes of place-connectedness, community resilience, financial objectives, commodification of causes, and even gender roles in capitalism are addressed as forming part of Robinson's envisioned changes for the capitalist system. By analyzing Robinson's novel, readers can not only visualize the shortcomings of the ongoing capitalist system, but also they can identify key factors that are needed to swirl the direction of that economy into one that benefits more people, perhaps even before arriving at such drastically-altered world (i.e., before the year 2140).

Keywords: radical ecology, capitalism, New York, eco-fiction, critique of capitalism, reformation of capitalism

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I. Introduction

“People sometimes say no one saw it coming, but no, wrong: they did” (Robinson 135).

“In *New York 2140*, the future city is partly submerged as a result of catastrophic climate change and rising sea water levels ... the novel presents a tentative resolution to the social, economic and ecological tensions converging on New York waterfront in the early twenty-first century” (Ameel 1334).

“... Robinson’s New Yorkers are acutely aware of their city’s materiality, its reliance on Earth-derived substances and surrounding ecosystems, and its role as habitat for a multiplicity of organisms –as well as their own ecological dependencies and vulnerabilities” (Mączyńska 168).

“A state of revolt against global finance? Democracy versus capitalism? Could get very ugly” (Robinson 196).

Rising sea water levels are prominently becoming a common reality for people living in coastal cities, and this occurs even to citizens of metropolis like New York. Indeed, climate change has accelerated these and, in that process, demonstrated a variety of intertwined factors that severely threaten the stability of life. To name a few, rising sea water levels can cause species displacement and endangerment by forcing them into contact with human-made, toxic substances. When in close contact with houses, the presence of water can threaten the most fundamental aspect of living in a stable way: secure housing. Lastly, it can showcase social and economic inequalities when exasperated citizens struggle to survive crises without the proper help of a supporting government. The latter may instill the need for ‘revolt’ or change as the last quotation above suggests. In the face of these threats, in Kim Stanley Robinson’s 2017 novel *New York 2140*, New York emerges as a place of convergence for the human stubbornness to reside in a place prone to floods, the resilience of an economic system that is unfair, and the unavoidable, nonhuman species decimation.

New York 2140 is an ustopian¹ representation of New York in the year 2140. Drastically changed by a risen water level of 50 vertical feet, most of the city maintains its functionality through technological advancements such as “graphenated composite”² that waterproofs building facades. Yet, such technological fix simultaneously endorses a vertical, economic system that is mostly beneficial for wealthy traders who not only live in upper (therefore drier) areas of New York but also profit from price volatility in the affected, submerged areas of the city. Their profit is galvanized by the infrastructural instability of most buildings in lower Manhattan which are underwater. Moreover, with ambitious traders’ influence and their interest in romanticizing the image of New York despite the ongoing climate crisis, the city has gained a bourgeois flair by being considered a “SuperVenice,” where transportation occurs on-water (with boats) and through skybridges that connect skyscrapers and super scrappers. The novel presents a clear contrast between the wealthy, unaffected by the changes in climate living in upper towers of Manhattan and the increasing lower classes who experience the severe effects of climate change more directly. However, *New York 2140* mostly concentrates in the middle class by showing a diverse cast, all inhabitants of the Old MetLife Building in Madison Square. This residence tower is in direct contact with the intertidal zone, an area that, physically and legally, cannot be owned by either the government or the private entities due to its ambiguity in legal status since it shifts from dry to wet land with the ebb and flood tides. Its proximity to water is also a threat to the residents’ lives.

In the narrative world of *New York 2140*, the characters face threats at social, economic and ecological levels, which lead them to a revolt that calls for a reformation of the capitalist system. These are (1) the threat of privatization to their public residence, the MetLife Building, (2) the threat of financial inequalities when dealing with climate change crises, and (3) the threat of ecological endangerment driven by wealthy radicals. As each character’s story unfolds, they all grow substantially towards bigger purposes. Namely, the social worker Charlotte runs for congressional office in the look of justly advocating for democracy after leading an unsuccessful protest that demanded the habilitation of vacant private towers for all New Yorkers affected by a hurricane. Also, the money-oriented trader Franklin who always plays safe with the sole interest

¹ Coined by Margaret Atwood, “ustopian” refers to a hybrid made of dystopia and utopia.

² These are also referred to as “diamond sheeting” in the novel, and it’s a composite laminate that permeates the building while offering strength, flexibility and weight.

of profiting in his business dares to invest in venture capital to help more people keep afloat in the intertidal zone. Finally, the celebrity Amelia confesses to use her body to lure more consumers to care for important causes such as species preservation. In terms of their plan to reform capitalism, it entails a massive financial strike to force private markets to work for the government. This plan aims at reforming capitalism by turning the wealth of an elite into commonwealth by nationalizing banks so that private enterprises are now national and in service of most citizens. The plan succeeds in turning New York into a common welfare state where housing, education and health is provided by the government through progressive taxation implementation within two years after the novel starts, i.e., by 2143.

In this thesis, I analyze the role of community, finance, and eco-sensitivity as they become pivotal to the reformation of capitalism through what I identify as a shift towards Carolyn Merchant's "radical ecology" in Robinson's *New York 2140*. To this end, this thesis first displays the main tenets of 'radical ecology' and introduces the role of literature in shaping readers' understanding of the climate change phenomenon. In terms of the analysis, this thesis is divided into two analytical portions. In the first part, I analyze Charlotte, a social worker who actively defends the sense of community within the MetLife building as it ensures everyone's lives and the Citizen,³ a narrative voice outside the main cast of characters who serves throughout the novel to elucidate historical happenings and critically comment on the novel's plot. They are the key agents in shaping the theme of "community" and radicalizing it because the Citizen provides historical overviews of how individual and capital-focused New Yorkers are while Charlotte incites a sense of community among them to confront climate change since it threatens their lives in similar ways. Together, these characters exhibit the need for a shift from individual survival to communitarian survival. In the remaining half of this thesis, I juxtapose the themes of "finance" and "eco-sensitivity" due to the role of capitalism in exercising careless commodification of life in the look for profit. In this commodification process, I also elaborate on the role of gender in perpetuating the exploitation of natural resources. More specifically, this second section scrutinizes Franklin, the trader who proposes the plan to reform capitalism and Stefan and Roberto,⁴ a pair of adventurous gold miners whose mischievous actions unite the rest

³ While "the Citizen" is presented in various ways in the novel such as "the Citizen" "that citizen" or simply "the Citizen redux" and even "city smartass again," I analyze such a character as unified and single whose apparitions in the entire story are linked to a single entity instead of many citizens.

⁴ Stefan and Roberto are treated here as one character as their apparitions in the novel are as a pair at all times.

of the cast, as embodiments of the theme “finance.” Finally, in the theme of “eco-sensitivity,” I concentrate on Amelia, a committed environmentalist and T.V. star who transports endangered animals to livable niches despite her image being constantly sexualized to her audience by her producers. Concerning the structure of the analysis, I proceed to analyze *community* by proposing models for a sense of place that may facilitate understanding New Yorker’s fervent attachment to their submerged city. In this same chapter, threats to the sense of community are elaborated on to arrive at a hypothesis of what unifies such a diverse cast of characters and how such unification helps them reform capitalism. Subsequently, the novel’s analysis on *finance and eco-sensitivity* first traces the interaction between capitalism and life and expands on how certain causes the characters within the novel fight for are commodified or ignored through gender-controlling imagery. I conclude this thesis by offering future directions on research on *New York 2140* more centered in the field of blue humanities, and by drawing from Kim Stanley Robinson himself where he discloses the ends and roles of his novels in the twenty first century.

Besides imagining the dire effects of prolonging our twenty-first century habits with no consideration for the human and nonhuman future, this illustrative work of fiction is similarly at the injunction of three movements that will be expanded on in the following section: ecocriticism, social ecology and blue ecocriticism. These are movements that explain human relationship with the environment, with other humans, and with the ocean.

A. Theoretical Framework: Ecocriticism, Social Ecology, and Blue Ecocriticism

Human impact on the environment has shaped the current epoch into what many call “The Anthropocene,” an age which started “when human effects on the environment became so great that they registered in the geological record” (Emmett and Nye 16). Notwithstanding the fact that marker for such a moment is an ongoing debate which will unlikely reach a unanimous response – as Emmet and Nye comment (96) – the Anthropocene classifies human beings as a dire or ‘disruptive force’ for the planet (16) and, in other instances, the Anthropocene is a “shared catastrophe that we have all fallen into” (Chakrabarty qtd. in Emmet and Nye 102). Within this human-made ‘catastrophe,’ the concept of “ecocriticism,” or “the study of literature and the environment” (Clark 1), has gained considerable traction for being a movement that “asks how literary works represent nature, or changes in nature, how ‘science itself is open to literary analysis’ and seeks ‘cross-fertilization between literary studies and environmental discourse’ across the Humanities” (Glottfelty qtd. in Selden, Widdowson and Brooker 262). In

fewer words, ecocriticism studies the relationship between human and nonhuman agents as it relegates the self-bestowed primacy of humanity to consider other forms of life and, consequently, proposes a new place for humanity within nature (Clark 5). As it does so, it redirects questions of scientific discourse towards humanities as they are “essential to understanding and resolving dilemmas that have been created by industrial society” (S. Emmet & E. Nye 4).

While ecocriticism has vastly found expressions through its interdisciplinary nature such as ecofeminism, environmental justice, queer ecology, and thing theory (to name a few), this thesis focuses more specifically on “social ecology” and “blue ecocriticism.” The former “envision[s] a world in which basic human needs are fulfilled through an economic restructuring that is environmentally sustainable” (Merchant *Radical* 153), which ultimately summarizes the objective of reforming capitalism that encompasses the main conflict of *New York 2140*. Furthermore, as an extension of social ecology, “cultural ecology” becomes key to understand the critique of cultural behavior in the novel as it “considers the sphere of human culture not as separate from but as interdependent with and transfused by ecological processes and natural energy cycles” (Zapf “Ecocriticism” 137). Finally, blue ecocriticism is part of the ‘oceanic turn,’ a movement that, given the advent of submerged reality driven by climate change and the menacing rising sea water, “renders vast oceanic space into [an] ontological place” (Deloughrey 32). This creates a new reality in which “the largest space on earth is suddenly not so external and alien to human experience” (34). A world depicted in such terms, in which social ecology, cultural ecology, and blue ecocriticism synergistically interact to enact a change for the better, is precisely the world of Robinson’s *New York 2140*. In order to understand Robinson’s narrative of a submerged New York City and the ways that community engagement, economic behavior and ecological motivations are shown to result in the development of a positive radical ecology, it is necessary to outline what is meant by “radical ecology” and how it may aid a collective movement beyond man’s exploitative relationship with nature.

B. A Divergent Ecology: Radical Ecology

Under the drastic transformation of submerged Anthropocene which has staggeringly changed the patterns of community engagement, economic behavior, and ecological motivations, it is vital to understand the mainstays of the seemingly perennial capitalist system, the divergence in eco-preservative thought, and linguistic/cultural assumptions of nature. The

interaction between humans and nonhumans makes the word “ecology” emanate as a linchpin as it is located in the very center of this relationship. Nonetheless, despite “ecology” being largely described with a certain harmonious, respectful, and curiosity-driven tone in scientific discourse,⁵ I agree with Morton in that “ecology” possesses linguistic assumptions about “nature” that already entail envisioning humans as active subjects surrounded by inert environmental objects (*Ecology Without Nature* 2-3). What Morton calls “ecologocentrism” is an internal rhetorical structure (6), which is succinct and redolent of Derrida’s deconstruction, namely, a kind of logic that preconfigures the relationship one is to have with nature. In this case that relationship is exploitative. In turn, this exploitative relationship is what Cheney regards as western insensibility in industrialized cultures, which is the displacement from a language –such as Native Americans’ which carries meaningful connections to earth – towards a scientific discourse that is used as alienated, unembodied and worthless tool (qtd. in Emmet & Nye 146). In further argumentation, Morton comments that “nature is the focal point that compels us to assume certain attitudes. Ideology resides in the attitude we assume to a fascinating object” (20), which then implies that the iterations of a human-as-subject with nature-as-object interaction performatively reinforce the current paradigm in which nature is to be used by humanity and for its only benefit. Consequently, I concur with Morton that *such ecology* has been used as an operational principle in modern society⁶ that spurs out of a culture of human domination over nature (63-43).

This disconnection from a language connected to earth characteristic of industrialized cultures aligns itself with an ‘egocentric’ model rather well-known: Laissez Faire Capitalism (Merchant *Radical* 68). As Merchant addresses it in great detail in *The Death of Nature*, the rise of capitalism can be traced back to a ‘death of nature’ when, as a whole society, the scientific method displaced animistic and organic links that conformed a certain ‘restraining order’ previous societies held towards nature, a moral fiber that impeded consecrating nature since it meant vitality for humans. Briefly, nature used to be akin to a human being in value and respectability. Accordingly, the legacy of the scientific method, she argues, is a mechanistic worldview that extended autonomous (like agriculture machinery which magnifies the power of

⁵ See, for example, definitions provided by Merriam Webster, Wordreference, and Oxford English Dictionary.

⁶ Modern society must be understood here as that which preceded the scientific revolution. The first usage of the word “ecology,” according to Oxford English Dictionary dates to 1875.

human beings in the field) and nonautonomous prowess (like clocks which establish certain order and orientation for societies); “the first were symbol of power, the second of order” (*Death of Nature* 217). In combination, schedules and the proudly magnified power of human hands led to exploitation of nature through the mechanistic framework they possess, and the new world order these tools promised. Hence, Merchant proceeds, both autonomous and nonautonomous aspects are expressions of the foundational assumption that nature is dead, inert, observable and malleable as it is free, self-regenerating material, which would be a waste not to use. These assumptions have been conceptualized as the ‘Baconian nature enslavement’ (Bacon qtd. in Fleming 26). It is a perspective of nature that assumes that humans are right to exploit nature since it is just fuel for bigger purpose such as capitalist expansion. This has become foundational tenets for capitalism. Finally, this (assumed) death of nature is aided by a capitalist mentality that, as Shiva states, instantiates a rectilinear, dualistic, and reductionist model that violates the principles of earth regeneration (8). What Shiva means is that capitalism offer homogeneous, simplistic, and exploitative view of the world, which humans continue prolonging today. Since capitalism has behaved with such ambition towards incessant growth ever since the scientific revolution, it should come as no surprise that Robinson devices his novel in the year 2140 as the product of perpetuating that capitalist system with nonstop violations of ecological balance.

Arguably, having the background of such derailment in ecological balance is a must when analyzing a fictive world where (1) capitalism has exhausted many resources as to create a comedy of the commons, not coincidentally the title of the concluding part in *New York 2140*; (2) a fictive world that exhibits fierce commitment to living in a megacity even though it has been partly submerged; (3) a city whose stability is threatened by an unnatural proximity to ebb and flood tides. This intricate portrait in Robinson’s novel of slowly drowning life (human and nonhuman) against the corporate survival of buildings and rich people demands a change of New Yorker’s fundamental principles of *ecology*. Perhaps, given the prevalence of capitalism up until the year 2140, this alternative ecology that Robinson proposes can be considered a radical one.

Among the alternatives scholars present to this exploitation, Merchant excels with her concept of “radical ecology,” which she defines as “the cutting edge of social ecology [since] it pushes social and ecological systems towards new patterns of production, reproduction and consciousness that will improve the quality of human life *and the natural environment*” (*Radical* 9 emphasis added). Among the most known types of radical ecology, “social ecology” and “deep

ecology” take prominence. While the former has been explained above as one inextricably homocentric where meeting human needs lie at its core, the latter advocates the idealism of “ecocentrism.”⁷ In other words, deep ecology aims towards sustainable practices based on egalitarianism of all living forms (Merchant 107). Furthermore, deep ecology “focuses *on transformation at the level of consciousness and worldview*, rather than [merely] the transformation of production and reproduction” (86 emphasis added), as social ecology does. These proposals have had a real impact in the world to the point that it has created certain controversy in defining “ideal” models of upcoming ecologies that may better at ensuring life beyond money-centered capitalism. For example, deep ecology causes nearly ubiquitous debate in ecocriticism for its ‘biocentric’ emphasis (Clark 2), and it does so even in *New York 2140*, which I will expand on in section titled “models of ideological sustainability,” as part of the eco-sensitivity. Despite this controversy of “ideal models,” the reformation of capitalism the characters in the novel aim at is irrevocably a shift towards a ‘radical ecology’ as they engage in social upsurge demanding political action to change the unjust life conditions of New Yorkers with the aim of leaving profit-centered capitalism behind. Even when *New York 2140* shows a struggle to survive in a submerging *fictional* world, it does expose readers to the implications of perpetuating the current model of capitalism, and it reinforces the notion that capitalism can work *for* the people and not necessarily be the antithesis of climate change. In other words, it imagines the way towards a more sustainable world within a capitalist economy.

C. Importance of Eco-Fiction

Beyond theorizing a way out of these environmental issues that can simultaneously offer a respite to an exploited nature and satisfy the ambitions of those in power and solve the world’s problems related to resource allocation, literature plays a crucial role in shaping the collective consciousness so that such a changed in paradigm is more easily achieved. Moreover, my contention is that— taking a dialectic approach to the current issues of global warming – literature can be seen as the antithesis (of which the current model would be the thesis), and the resulting

⁷ Ecocentrism, Buell recognizes, is ‘succinctly’ defined by Timothy O’Riordan as “[a movement that] preaches the virtues of reverence, humility, responsibility, and care; it argues for low impact technology (but is not antitechnological); it decries bigness and impersonality in all forms (but especially in the city); and demands a code of behavior that seeks permanence and stability based upon ecological principles of diversity and homeostasis” (Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*, note 1)

educated public would be the synthesis, a more sustainable one. This seems to resonate with Zapf, who states the following:

Literature draws its cognitive and creative potential from a threefold dynamic in its relationship to the larger cultural system –as a cultural-critical metadiscourse, an imaginative counterdiscourse, and a reintegrative interdiscourse [what I identify as thesis, antithesis, and synthesis respectively]. It is a textual form which breaks up ossified social structures and ideologies, symbolically empowers the marginalized, and reconnects what is culturally separated. In that way, literature counteracts economic, political or pragmatic forms of interpreting and instrumentalizing human life, and breaks up one-dimensional views of the world and the self, opening them up towards their repressed or excluded other (“Ecocriticism” 138).

What I suggest, and what Zapf seems to suggest as well, is that imagining a way out of the exploitative paradigm we currently live in is the way literature can present alternative modes of living that may be difficult envision by ourselves. In like manner, it empowers people since it theorizes that change can be attained. Driven by the acknowledgement that humans are embedded in nature, a realization that has been growing gradually (Zapf “Ecocriticism” 136), it has been recognized that “‘we do not manage the environment,’ only the human behaviors that affect its structure and processes” (Robin qtd. in Emmet and Nye 8). In other words, human beings are not merely observers; they are an active part of nature. Therefore, the Anthropocene stands for an era where not only is there awareness of humans’ impact on earth but also, an ecological consciousness is being reevaluated, and literature has the potential to cause a shift in cultural behavior, to reconnect to a meaningful ecology. As will be argued later, upon the introduction of technology and new ways of solving issues, “the global environmental crisis demands new ways of thinking and new communities that produce environmental solutions as a form of civic knowledge” (7). This exacts active citizenship which literature can mobilize. However, reading climate change fiction (Cli-Fi) may also present far-fetched phenomena to such an extent that not all readers will consider it serious or empowering; this may thwart that readers’ mobility towards change.

In his book *The Great Derangement*, Ghosh explores how climate change has been sidelined to science fiction and thus become a genre that is not of the interest of “serious literary

journals” even (11). He further questions, “what is it about climate change that the mention of it should lead to banishment from the preserves of serious fiction? And what does this tell us about culture writ and its patterns of evasion?” (13). Thus, drawing from personal experience and his knowledge on fictional representations of climate-driven catastrophes, Ghosh answers the above question by claiming that Cli-Fi is not taken seriously since the phenomena portrayed in it seems highly unlikely. He expands further that in fiction “fillers” establish a sense of “regularity” or ambience in the “everyday details” (Moretti qtd. Ghosh 17-18). Given such a convention in writing to reinforce normality, portraying – seemingly unrelated – singular, aleatory catastrophes driven by climate change like hurricanes, tsunamis, earthquakes, etc., is often considered as too far-fetched, beyond the improbable. In Ghosh’s words, “within the pages of a novel an event that is only slightly improbable in real life – say, an unexpected encounter with a long-lost childhood friend – may seem wildly unlikely (22). Given Ghosh’s contribution to the importance of realistic climate change fiction, I argue that Cli-Fi must prominently portray a world in realistic terms so that a stronger connection can be achieved with its audience; in fact, De Cock argues that *New York 2140* already is a “positive response” to Ghosh’s Cli-Fi imperative in literary fiction (152). Likewise, not all lies in the writers’ hands: some shift must also come from readers. To this end, not only should we attenuate standards of what truly is probable, as the whole idea of probability is being called into question (Ghosh 24), but also we must *recognize*⁸ that these enigmatic events are speaking of an intimacy with nature that has long been abrogated by the assumption that humans are the only autonomous agents, the ‘gods’ (27-28), and are, therefore, allowed to exploit nature relentlessly. Eco-fiction can, then, empower the reader to imaginatively devise a way out of these problems, but, more importantly, it can shed light on current issues that threaten life for current and future generations. Examples of these issues are species decimation caused by global warming, sidelined populations caused by climate change driven phenomena and the ways in which capitalism is currently only serving to keep a top-down system with increasingly less mobility in its middle sections.

D. Capitalism in Literature: Wider Implications and Possibility of Change

⁸ “Recognition” here is used as Ghosh outlines it the introductory pages of his book: “a moment of recognition occurs when prior awareness flashes before us ... it arises rather from a renewed reckoning with a potentiality that lies within oneself” (9). In essence, it’s an act which requires prior knowledge, perhaps temporarily forgotten or not retrievable unless seen directly. It’s somewhat linked to words such as “epiphany” or “realization.”

New York 2140 imagines the perpetuation of our current exploitative relationship with nature by the year 2140 bringing massive changes to the living conditions of most people. One of the aspects that is prolonged and at the center of the exploitation of nature is that what Merchant termed ‘death of nature’ through a ‘Baconian nature enslavement’ (both explained above). Briefly, this was Francis Bacon’s belief and practice that nature is inert and dead and by subjugating it to observance and unmeasured usage, humans will gain control over their surroundings and lead to a new progressive future. These beliefs, it has been argued, have led to an increase in global temperature: it was of 1 degree Celsius in preindustrial times (last fifty years of the 18th century) yet, such a figure is growing by 0.2 per decade according to NASA. More importantly, Figueres and Rivett-Carnac estimate that if today’s global activities remain unchanged, the temperature increase will indeed be of 3 degrees Celsius “warmer than pre-industrial average global temperature,” which will signify a sheer increase of “3.7 degrees Celsius by 2100” (18). Notwithstanding the fact that climate change can also be driven by nonhuman agents, most of the climate alterations suffered today are brought about by human agency, as NASA also indicates. Controversially, climate change is a natural phenomenon, but the accelerated pace of its occurrence is a concerning matter since an irretrievable point looms the upcoming years where animal extinction, ecosystem decimation, an increasing sea water levels, among many other threats will become habitual (Figueres & Rivett-Carnac 16-17). It is an incontrovertible fact that point of crisis has been reached. Not only does literature seem to offer alternative ways of seeing and presenting climate change as an urgent matter that must be dealt with as soon as possible, but also it presents alternative ways of imagining a change in humans’ culture by challenging the tenets of capitalism such as that relentless natural exploitation.

On that note, Ghosh asserts that “the climate crisis is also a crisis of culture, and thus of the imagination” (12), since, historically speaking, culture is shaped by long-held ideas of desire (such as ‘vehicles,’ ‘appliances,’ or ‘dwellings’) passed on by generations and reinforced by intellectuals (or mass influencing figures), and these desires are linked to pleasant stimuli (13). “The artifacts and commodities that are conjured up by these desires are, in a sense, at once expressions of concealments of the cultural matrix that brought them into being” (Ghosh 13). For this reason, “ecology” as linguistically and ideologically flawed is not the only culprit for environmental exploitation. Rather, “culture” may be a second mainstay in a model that such auspices exploitation, which, sold illusively, is justified and propelled as a system of

development. Remarkably, such a system is, as a matter of fact, a system of “maldevelopment” since it creates the illusion of *endless* progress by disguising finite natural resource exploitation as rightful domination of nature (Shiva 6), yet in selling such vision, it elides the simple fact that exclusiveness is crucially *sine ne qua non* for if a substantial amount of people were to adopt such a model (as it is currently happening with India, China U.K, and U.S), unsustainability would havoc as humans would ‘devour’ the world (Ghosh 81-82). By speculating how a world would look if such patterns of human behavior and consumption would evolve with time, the narrative of *New York 2140* emerges. Hence, imagining a world that has kept on warming up and has kept such noxious, exclusivist tendencies of our contemporary capitalism is instrumental to understand and foresee the consequences of perpetuating the current capitalism and the current ecology we live with in our twenty first century. The question then is how has this novel been understood by its audience since its release on the spring of 2017?

E. Literature Review

Robinson’s *New York 2140* has been regarded as a “sustained critique of capitalism” from the outset, as Joshua Rothman states writing in *The New York Times*. In his view, by portraying denizens as dislocated by climate change, the novel “blame[s] global warming on financiers, and on a market system that consistently underestimates the environmental costs of economic growth.” What characterizes this novel, according to Rothman, is the portrayed resilience through the novel’s “vitality;” in other words, the fact that life, as blue humanities seek to visualize, thrives even when submerged, despite humans’ destructive behavior. In like manner, the novel’s critique of capitalism has been picked and expanded on by scholars. First, Daniel Cohen, for example, proceeds to praise the novel for its restraining depiction of large, catastrophic (nearly dystopian) reality or speculated reality of what the world could look like in the twenty second century. To him, simplicity is a tactful device to communicate hope, which more specifically translates to “we still have time” instead of “we are running out of time” or “we ran out of time” (8). This optimism, however, is something that, upon closer examination, scholar Lieven Ameel deems as “somewhat premature” (1328). This may be because the Ameel uses Schmitt’s concepts to explore the complexity of the novel in aspects such as the tendency of a capitalist system towards land appropriation (Schmitt qtd. Ameel 1330), one which given the status of the intertidal zone, makes the interest of capitalism in appropriating land conflict gravely legally speaking (1335). Furthermore, in referring to the mechanisms by which Robinson

presents a sustained criticism of capitalism in the novel, Aamel argues that “rather than presenting water as possessing a measure of agency, *New York 2140* describes liquidity as a metaphorization for capitalism’s power to restrict and direct human agency within monetised relationships” (1337). This point correlates with how Magdalena Mączyńska later views the role of imagery and happenings in the novel as she expresses that such floods open-up the city by “disrupt[ing] the familiar romance of urban capitalism” (170), a point that refers to the distortions of the landscape. Evidently, the scholars’ prior analyses have focused on the novel’s (watery) imagery and on capitalism tendencies. They have also scratched the surface of the landscape alteration. Indeed, Mączyńska even comments that the narrative voice of the Citizen is capable of disorienting readers by shifting iconic “landmarks” and projecting a drastically changed cityscape (171). In brief, *New York 2140* has been seen as an unequivocal critique capitalism, and even its water imagery has been analyzed as contributing to this capitalist critique. Building on these themes of finance and capitalism, this thesis adds consideration of “community” and “eco-sensitivity” to arrive at a sustained and compound analysis of what Robinson’s novel suggests it will take to reform capitalism by adapting towards radical ecology in the world of *New York 2140*. With the intent to understand how all these factors interact with one another, we first turn our attention to how community, its resilience and preservation, can challenge capitalism, and how it can propose an alternative ecology.

II. The Role of Community in Challenging Capitalism and in Radical Ecology

New York 2140’s character cast is diverse in background and social roles. This section examines how a sense of community emerges both in New York City as a whole and within the characters’ residence, the MetLife Building, when threatened by environmental changes and privatization. Distinctly, acute emphasis is made on the voice of the characters the Citizen and Charlotte; the former is a historical, critical, dually bohemian and alien(ated) commentator of New York’s development, history, and society. The latter is a social worker deeply committed to the communal wellbeing of all inhabitants of the MetLife building and its publicness. This section is divided in four subsections. It starts by providing models of place and place sense to understand the fascination of New Yorkers to remain inhabiting a submerged city; this will offer an understanding of New Yorkers’ resilience. Further, the second section titled “community under attack” focuses more acutely on the MetLife building and the private and environmental threats to the residents’ sense of community, which I claim to strengthen their sense of belonging

to their residence. Third, I offer two criticisms of capitalism: “unfairness” and “reordering of hierarchies” both of which, given the fact they affect all residents, augment the solidarity among the residents. Finally, the concluding section titled “reformed capitalism” draws from the community engagement to explain how a sense of community is necessary to reform capitalism within the novel through political leadership.

A. Exploring Place and Place-connectedness

Anyway there it lies [New York] filling the great bay, no matter what you think or believe about it, spiking out of the water like a long bed of poisonous sea urchins onto which dreamers cling, as to an inconveniently prickly life raft, their only refuge on the vast and windy deep, gasping like Aquaman in a seemingly-impossible-to-survive superhero’s fake low point, still dreaming their fever dreams of glorious success (39).

This quotation embodies the New Yorker’s mentality in their toxic attachment to their city, which invites readers to question what factors build a resilience that, even in the face of being progressively drowned by climate change, continues to justify their dwelling in the city. For this reason, engaging in a conversation about models of place and place-connectedness becomes a crucial part of analyzing this novel. When engaging in such conversations of what determines “place” to be a place, varied models have been developed. Nonetheless, one must first understand how place is derived from space. Buell discusses the elusiveness of the term in detail (55-60), and uses Carter, Donald & Squires to provide the valuable insights that, first, place is “‘space to which meaning has been ascribed,’ assigned distinctness and value” (qtd. in Buell *Writing* 59). Second, placeness “implies affect, ‘a deeply personal phenomenon founded on one’s life-world and everyday practices’” (Paasi qtd. in Buell *Writing* 60). Under this light, place emerges in this discussion as an attachment that is reinforced daily, and placeness is an identifiable feeling. Furthermore and regarding models of place, Buell recounts at least five “dimensions of place connectedness” (here referred to as ‘models’), yet I shall focus on (1) a model of ‘concentric’ circles and (2) a model of dynamics because I deem them the most relevant to what is portrayed in *New York 2140*. The first of which envisions place as a group of expanding circles of knowledge in “from-home-to-society bases;” in other words, the model is like a rippling effect on water (64-65) which, consequently, not only creates an epicenter, but also crucially determines what behaviors and what orientations place(s) allow(s). By means of

illustration, Ghosh comments on seashore settlements like New York, Singapore and Hong Kong that “a colonial vision of the world, in which proximity to the water represents power and security, mastery and conquest, has now been incorporated into the very foundations of middle-class patterns of living across the globe” (31). Ghosh suggests that cities like New York have a colonial settlement and development that attaches ‘power’ and ‘security:’ this exemplifies behaviors and orientations from the very inception of these places up until our contemporary reality. Indeed, such orientations beg questions such as “what is the nascence?” and “where does origin lie?” To answer these first two questions, let us characterize the New Yorker ideology in the year 2140 according to the novel as it may help us draw a pattern of behavior and hypothesize on their fervent attachment to place.

A good place to start dissecting the personality of New Yorkers is with Part One titled “The Tyranny of Sunk Costs,” which readers later learn is an economic term that defines the stubborn resilience of having invested too much in a business that the attachment halts one from recognizing failure and walking away (37). This is followed up by an obsession that includes strengthening one’s commitment so that “you persevere unto death, a monomaniacal New Yorker to the end” (37). As a result, the mentality of a New Yorker in 2140, above all, seems to be one of fiercely committed to resilience. Nonetheless, while resilience is often praised for its stick-to-itiveness, it can also hinder progress given the assumptions of the term. Just as it occurs with the traditional concept of ecology, it may thwart the way towards divergent pathways and divergent outcomes, as O’ Brien indicates (51-52). On that note, when people have been stricken by crisis, a mindset of ‘recovery’ that seeks retrieving a ‘pre-disaster’ world order is sought and endorsed (Carrigan qtd. in O’ Brien 51). In this way, resilience can be toxic in the face of climate threats since it may be believed that the problem will be solved with minor fixes ignoring thus how fundamentally important it is to change or adapt to the new circumstances. As a matter of fact, climate change prompts threats to their inhabitants as Ghosh denotes, “these cities [referring to New York, Singapore and Hong Kong], all brought into being by processes of colonization, are now among those that are most directly threatened by climate change” (31). This is foundational in the fictional world of *New York 2140*, which has been staggeringly transmuted through two massive rise-water events called “Pulses.” The stubborn resilience of these New Yorkers becomes axiomatic as they continue to thrive notwithstanding the marginal displacement of citizens, the threats to hospitality of the city, not to mention the ecological

disasters by releasing unprocessed human-made toxins into the sea. More significantly, their capitalist system stays afloat. Under this light, the proclivity of New Yorkers to perpetuate their elitist capitalist tendencies despite the ongoing crises through stubborn resilience is what I identify as the perniciousness of capitalism. At first, New Yorkers contribute to feed this system since too much has been invested in its maintenance and in giving New York its splendor. However, as the novel progresses, New Yorkers seem to understand that there is a need to reshape capitalism throughout by channeling that resilience towards a growing sense of community.

The concentric model of place not only takes root in ‘the tyranny of sunk costs,’ but also in other New Yorker behaviors such as being inward-looking and self-centered, which also expand on the question of what constitutes nascency and how do people orient their existence when their city is akin to ‘the center of the earth.’ Being inward-looking and self-centered are characteristics that do not seem to be a new trend in New Yorker’s behavior according to the Citizen: “And so New York Keeps on happening. The skyscrapers, the people, the what-have-yous” (38) Furthermore, New York isn’t just the capital of the world and “the capital of the capital,” but also the land of superlatives, a place where the adjectives “busiest, noisiest, fastest-growing, most-advanced, most cosmopolitan” take origin (38). Notably, the model of place as epicenter begins to fit in a fictional world that sees its very existence as the most exquisite expression of humanity: the Citizen comments that New York is “the spot where the Big Bang occurred” (38). In like manner, this nascency is attributed to the MetLife Building as it is considered “an omphalos of history,” where many first moments have occurred, as claimed by the Citizen (82). It becomes clearer why people would continue to reside in a building that is menaced by the ebb and flood tides given its location in the intertidal zone. Nonetheless, as the Citizen remarks, it is a city that has always changed; thus, how can a city change so dynamically and still be appealing to live in? That is, how does New Yorkers’ attachment survive in a city that is constantly being remade even by the threats of water?

The fact that New York is an ever-evolving city poses a paradox in the novel in which despite every corner changing and expanding, denizens’ attachment is as fervent as it can get: “people are back, of course, having never left, still everywhere, they’re like cockroaches you can’t get rid of them” (37). Buell’s second model of place becomes crucial in understanding that attachment as it regards place as dynamic since “places themselves are not stable, free-standing

entities but continually shaped and reshaped by forces from both inside and outside” (67). This perspective further argues that places are “open and porous networks of social relations” (68). I wonder, then, what other factors account for this nonnegotiable attachment? Part Five titled “Escalation of Commitment” offers a response since, as an economic term, it explains the behavior of “increasing the resources available to an unsuccessful venture in the hope of recovering past losses” (Oxford Dictionary of Finance and Banking). This no-lose mentality, I argue, is comingled with capitalism since its intrinsic ambition is to expand with no regards to shortcomings. As an economic system that survives through continuous growth and resource exploitation, capitalism lies in close parallels with the ever evolving, the ever changing. Indeed, on closer examination of the opening quotation of this analytical chapter, we may find capitalism and place-connectedness synergistically feeding one another as capitalism finds its expression in New York City with its leading economic presumption and ever-expanding nature. The quotation similarly exemplifies resilience and stubbornness of New Yorkers “clinging” to that commitment of living in a submerging dream, which has *escalated* to a “poisonous level.” I would lastly argue that the idea of New York being “seemingly impossible to survive” is part of the dream of this city, and success in doing so is its prize and a simultaneous stimulus to reinforce the system despite any crisis it presents. In these ways, resilience partly justifies New Yorker’s sense of place, but environmental peril cannot be abrogated for too long, unless their city projects the illusion that humans are in control of their surroundings. This can be done through other technological fixes also present in the novel such as skybridges and water-permeating sheets.

In *New York 2140*, the city continues to evolve and being invested in through New Yorkers’ sense of alienation with their surrounding environment as it reassures citizens that they are in control of the current state of affairs. Such alienation aids those systemic crises to matter less even when everyone’s residences are being threatened by water and social inequalities. As a matter of fact, Buell’s contention of place aids understanding two lines of behavior in regards to this human-environment relationship: “Neither the imagination of environmental endangerment nor, for that matter, of environmental well-being can be properly understood without a closer look at how the imagination of place-connectedness itself works: its multiple dimensions, its cultural significances, *its capacity to serve by turns as either an insulating or a galvanizing force*” (*Writing* 56 emphasis added). Buell’s statement helps conceptualize “environment” as capable, on the one hand, of galvanizing the sense of place for all inhabitants of the MetLife

building and for New York as a whole, i.e., create a stronger attachment to the dwellings (this will be expanded on in subsequent section titled “Community Under Attack”). On the other hand, place may become insulating in *New York 2140* since the inhabitants of New York city have a minimal interaction with their environment. This is facilitated by the city’s affordances in shortening New Yorkers’ inhabitation of outdoor places. For this reason, I argue that place being insulating prolongs the existence of an elitist capitalism since it limits the spaces of interaction with their surroundings, and that deprives citizens from facing the need for a change in ecology. In the novel, New Yorkers are said to be dressed in black, with little insulation and little regard for the environment since the city itself offers the affordance of making the interaction with the outside world a “dash between subway and building” (251). This, of course, is an illustrative example the Citizen provides when talking about New York in general, but while there may be no subways anymore, people’s interactions with the surrounding environments continue to be minimal as they are facilitated by skybridges and on-water transportation. This interaction provided by modernity blinds them and poses a further threat that is explained with the concept of “Expert Overconfidence,” the title of Part Two and another economic term: the phenomenon of not being able to comprehend the totality of a matter (23). This is a threat as the “dashes between the subway and the building” that conform the interaction of the New Yorker with its environment thwart the awareness of life, which is ultimately endangered.

Essentially, the city itself is capable of backgrounding how imperative it is to adequately respond to climate change through those technological fixes while the citizens’ attachment to their place and functional pernicious system halts them from recognizing that a change is imminent. Despite place-connectedness being capable of unifying people, both the model of concentric circles and the model of dynamic place exemplify that resilience can indeed perpetuate unsustainability.

These two models of place-connectedness and their implications in the narrative world of *New York 2140* lead me to assert that the narrative works the tension between resilience and environmental threats. Conversely, New York is filled with places that are too sacrosanct for the collective whole to consider its abandonment, even in the face of the severe floods and threats to life. These buildings stand as reified, or epitomized examples of New Yorkers’ grandeur, and the years they have intricately subserve to reinforce the stubbornness of its denizens. In essence, New Yorkers are characterized by their self-absorption in being ‘the big bang,’ their superlatives

of self-expression, and their self-fabricated blindness for the threats of life. These characteristics emerge from understanding their place-connectedness at the very center and adamantly striving to reside in a submerging city. Notwithstanding their attachment, the characters' life is imperiled to such an extent that a shift in ecology will become not only feasible, but urgent!

B. Community Under Attack: Privatizing and Environmental Threats to Community

While the aforementioned models of placeness justify New Yorkers attachment, the MetLife building specifically becomes essential to demonstrate the violations to residences' lives through the threats of privatization and environmental degradation. Herein, place connectedness is crucial in unifying or working as a 'galvanizing force' since "the more a site feels like a place, the more fervently it is so cherished, the greater the potential concern at its violation or even the possibility of violation" (Buell *Writing* 56). Thus, this analysis naturally leads to answering the following three further questions: "What are violations that these New Yorkers experience?" How do these New Yorkers react to such endangerment?" What frames such reactions? The major voice that articulates answers to these questions is Charlotte.

An increasingly prominent worker for the Householder's Union, Charlotte, exhibits the highest communal commitment in *New York 2140*. Being both an advocate for immigrants and refugees and being the chair of the building board, Charlotte moves back and forth from the public affairs of the whole city to those within the MetLife only. With her administrative role and leadership, her character spans between the city and a larger community allowing readers to see the interconnectedness of an unjust system that is proliferating social inequalities increasingly augmented by the changes in climate. As one of the representatives of the building, Charlotte must deal with the offer to buy the MetLife building and she must solve crises arisen by the environmental peril around the intertidal zone.

The first threat the MetLife building faces is to be privatized as it is located in the intertidal zone, an area that is steadily accruing value as is gaining popularity since it is akin to a 'SuperVenice,' so the European bourgeois flair is appealing to wealthy investors. When the members of the Householder's Union receive an anonymous offer to buy the building, the economist Franklin explains that "everything that can be traded is a commodity" (152), which conflicts with Charlotte's communal sensibility (152), and forces her to carefully examine the legal stance of the MetLife as she does not want to sell it. As it is a co-op building, Charlotte

must allow others to vote so that an agreement can be democratically (and legally) reached. However, despite the majority of the votes being against the offer (1,207 to 1,093), the small margin does alarm Charlotte since the offer of privatization almost manages to lure the residents to sell their community. Charlotte is so startled that she furiously questions:

What were they thinking? Did they really imagine that money in any amount could replace what they had made here? It was as if nothing had been learned in the long years of struggle to make lower Manhattan a viable space, a city-state with a different plan. Every ideal and value seemed to melt under a drenching of money, the universal solvent. Money, money, money. The fake fungibility of money, the pretense that you could buy meaning, buy life.... Many things can't be bought. Money isn't time, it isn't security, it isn't health. You can't buy any of those things. You can't buy community or a sense of home. So what can I say. I'm glad the vote went against this bid on our lives. I wish it had been much more lopsided than it was (314).

A sense of pride and consternation is fervent in her words, yet what is more prominent is her warning to not vilipend the commons to the enchantments of capitalism and the promises of its money. Despite the pretense of aeration for the bourgeois SuperVenice, 'home,' 'security,' 'community,' and 'health' are factors the private vision lacks. Rather than offsetting the inequalities that capitalism itself has fostered, privatization is proposing to buy life and its mainstays. In fact, Charlotte clearly states that such "sense of home" is something that has been built with time and communitarian involvement and cannot be purchased. In this light, it can be said that privatization instigates a quarrel that shows the ambition of rich individuals to displace other citizens with little regard to their home, security or even health. However, not only is the MetLife building at risk of being bought, but also at risk of being destroyed by menacing environmental factors that come along with its proximity to the intertidal zone.

In addition to the risk of privatization, a second threat to community is the environmental threat, which is alluded to in the above quotation as well with Charlotte's call to remember the struggle of recovery from the devastation The Pulses brought. Accordingly, one of Charlotte's clients is an old man, who Stefan and Roberto rescue from his collapsing dwelling (also in the intertidal zone). As readers learn about this character's background story, readers learn that during this old man's childhood, he experienced one of the Pulse and its life-transmogrifying

devastation. Narrated in great detail, he recounts how it arrived unexpectedly catching people in their ordinariness, how bridges collapsed, and how everyone ran to Central Park (159), a place that later becomes key in reconnecting with a sense of crisis. “No one could believe it, but it was true. A new day had come. We knew it had happened, because there we were. We knew it would never be the same. Downtown was gone. So that was very strange” (159). It must be noted that the togetherness of his narrative, that is, the “wee-ness” is constructed by the environmental peril that puts everyone in danger: the floods affect everyone indiscriminately disregarding their wealth making everyone just a vulnerable, and that can be drawn from the point of view of this character. In addition, it must take more than water to erase the existence of “downtown” from the collective memory as Ryden claims that a “developed sense of place [is] ‘an unseen layer of usage, memory, and significance— an invisible landscape, if you will, —of imaginative landmarks’ [which] seems to be ‘superimposed upon the geographical surface and the two-dimensional map’” (qtd. in Buell *Writing* 67). This self-identification with their sense of place accentuates the attachment to New York on one side, and it shows a dire violation to their collective memory and the life such spaces abode. Seen as such, prior environmental degradation has unified the community in New York, and Charlotte’s consternation is a direct question to the historical integrity of the inhabitants of the MetLife building, a new kind of “never forget.” Consequently, keeping a connection with the past that reminds residents of the environmental threats suffered becomes the mechanism of community that is used efficaciously to defend public from the lure of capitalist novelty. Therefore, the realization of what is at stake for the residents of the intertidal, the prior and upcoming threats of environmental peril are motivators to remain united. By sustaining that unity, the residents of the MetLife building are more broadly depicted as being able to resist two further problems with capitalism, the unfair advantages of private spaces over public spaces, and the discrimination caused by social hierarchy. The novel suggests that only by confronting these can New Yorkers begin to reform capitalism and move towards a new ecology.

C. Critiques of Capitalism

The first critique to bear in mind lies in the unfair advantages that private spaces possess over the public ones in the face of such environmental degradation and the crises that New Yorkers experience. Brought about by two Pulses of a total of fifty vertical feet which have inundated lower Manhattan, New York City continues to be New York City, only this time with

some two-headed fish and uneatable species swimming in the oily waters of a partly submerged city (37). Similarly, radical changes do not only lie in the water, as “humanity’s industrial civilization” severely worsened the weather” (412). In *New York 2140*, the world of the twenty-second century has experienced tremendous kinds of wreck brought about by its extreme weather. A few examples of these are Hurricane Alfred in 2046, Hurricane Sandy in 2012 and the nameless storm in 1893 (414). To the eyes of the Citizen, New York is on its own “a recipe for a storm surge” (413). In addition, special attention must be paid to the First Pulse in 2060 which has evinced the level of exemption the rich had over the rest. In this Part titled “Liquidity Trap,” readers are told that a small fraction of the inhabitants of New York City considered such a Pulse “an act of creative destruction,” where helplessness in accepting the social and economic inequalities is the one viable way (138). This small portion is comprised of the aristocrats of New York City, who were not affected by the Pulse in the slightest since they can afford to live in upper-side residences, but the crisis was suffered by the ordinary, the proletariat, in a way similar to what Charlotte’s client described in the last section. Due to this incongruence in an environmental crisis that should theoretically affect everyone in similar portions, resilience to these environmental backlashes is being built and directed against the capitalist system, which has created such an unjust gap in privilege. While this is dormant at the beginning of the novel, it takes a new hurricane (which occurs in the later Parts of the novel) and the resolute negligence of the mayor to respond properly to that crisis to revive the sense of common outrage. Consequently, *New York 2140* criticizes capitalism for disregarding the degradation of the environment even when a great majority is being directly affected, and only a few are safe in their private, dry, and impervious buildings. This minority of privileged individuals is constantly growing more elitist since the floods have also caused social hierarchies to be more marked. This latter aspect is the second critique of capitalism I identify in the Robinson’s work.

A second critique of capitalism is visible in the problems it causes for citizens whose documentation has been lost in the devastating Pulses. This has caused a reorder of hierarchies and privileges. Even though New York is a city of immigrants, as Charlotte remarks (50), now many U.S. citizens are treated as illegal since they lost their documentation (214). The long-established impervious and impenetrable of North American character was literally washed away and a new migratory crisis had been brought by the flood and ebb tides. While this is acknowledged to have happened in other cities in the world as well, the fact of the matter is that

The Pulses augmented the population that suffers from inequality and the greater the number of affected ones evinces social injustice, which is strictly related to changed climate and perpetuated through capitalism. Indeed, Sze comments “the existence of environmental injustice is a reminder that people’s experience of ‘nature’ are shaped by their experiences of social, economic and political inequalities” (159). As this occurs to everyone who is unfortunate to live in an area prone to drowning, it is a hierarchal displacement that is unsystematic. Because of this, I recognize that I cannot call it “eco-racism” that certain inhabitants of New York experience, but it is still an example of ecological marginalization (i.e., marginalization by means of ecological disruption). Ultimately, that may be one of the teachings of the novel: the insignificance of systemic hierarchies upon environmental crisis. Simply put, it does not matter what race or nationality the affected ones are, climate change is a phenomenon that menaces to drown everyone indiscriminately and only the empowered ones will remain until the last minute. This, of course, occurs if the model of elitist capitalism continues to mediate the interest of human ambition. Upon the threats to life that the unfair advantages of private over public enterprises possess and the progressive and migratory sidelining the environment peril has caused, even the Citizen questions, “Could we afford to survive?” (360) Consequently, all these factors combined emulate a multivalence of collective efforts and commitments to the preservation of either an elitist capitalist system, which climate change has shown to be beneficial and survivable for only a fraction, or the reformation of this system that helps ensure the long-lasting stability that the commons provide and is, therefore, accessible to more people. The latter requires the participation of the entire community directed by a trusted leader such as Charlotte comes to be.

D. Reformed Capitalism Through Communitarian Engagement

In this concluding section, I synthesize how the sense of community aids the characters to reform capitalism. Seen through the lenses of the three previously analyzed sections, those are, (1) New Yorkers’ sense of place-connectedness, (2) threats of privatization and environmental degradation, (3) the criticism of capitalism that takes root in unfairness of private over public, and (4) the progressive sidelining of the capitalist system, I contend that capitalism is reformed through a thriving sense of community that is disenfranchised and virtually ignored in the midst of a climate crisis. This motivates all citizens to initiate a revolt which, despite being unsuccessful, does unite them all under the common reality of being all victims of the elitist

capitalist system. It also motivates Charlotte to run for congressional office, the ultimate commitment of community to create such a reform.

The Role of the City and the MetLife Building

New York City as much as the MetLife building play an essential role in explaining the complexity of a phenomenon through its simplification; they both depend on each other to demonstrate the enormity of the issue that climate change presents. Part Seven titled, “The More The Merrier” presents a critique to the mistaken assumption that things are simpler than they actually are; the Citizen refers to this as “ease of representation.” In this chapter, readers are told that the dynamics of New York can only be understood when analyzed from a global perspective, yet for one to understand such perspective, one must zoom in New York since “the periphery infects its core” (463). Indeed, Morton muses “ecology is profoundly about coexistence. Existence is always coexistent. No man is an island. Human beings need each other as much as they need an environment. Human beings *are* each other’s environment. Thinking ecologically isn’t simply about nonhuman things” (*The Ecological Thought* 4 original emphasis). Therefore, if it can be theorized to understand one thing in terms of another, I further claim that the same enlargement of the picture by zooming out occurs in the MetLife building. To be more exact, only by understanding the dynamics within this building can readers understand the dynamics of New York. For instance, Charlotte’s character development leads this very successfully as she constantly moves between her in-building and larger New York spheres demonstrating the ubiquitous presence of crisis. Likewise, readers move between micro and macro eco, socio, and political systems that are so entwined that they evince the flaws of the current ecologically disruptive model (capitalism). This waning and waxing of systems manifest the social, economic, political, and environmental intricacies that lie hidden under the layers of city grandeur. It furthermore evinces that citizens are not inhabiting the city on their own only, but also their ideologies permeate all actions like the system of production and reproduction, systemic oppression, and inequality and other internal, yet pressing inconsistencies discussed above.

Unquestionably, a factor that stays afloat with its citizens is the invisible ideology of capitalism since “for the earth to be appropriated as property humans must settle on the land and occupy it. Under capitalism, the earth is bought and sold as private property” (Merchant *Radical* 138). Therefore, the role of the city in *New York 2140* is dual; to physically concretize capitalism

sinking yet surviving by any means necessary the way the opening quotation of this chapter on community suggests, and to serve as a platform for this discussion where community collides and drowns with political, private, and environmental demands. Perhaps then, the novel presents an ecological proposition that demonstrates the interaction between humans and nature in creating a concept of ecology. Bookchin comments on an ecological proposition as such: “[it] challenges hierarchy in nature A process of development takes place in nature, ‘the result of an immanent dialectic within phenomena.’ Thus human communities and natural ecosystems interact with each other as they evolve. Not only do humans transform nature, but nature also transforms humans” (qtd. in Merchant *Radical* 144). Under this light, New York appears to operate dialectically by presenting itself both as thesis and antithesis within its paradox of place: it offers citizens a fervent physical structure for them to feel their placeness and are dually menaced by capitalistic projections which aim at leaving them placeless.

What Unifies Community: A Summary

I have argued that the sense of community originates because it is (1) pushed through habits of ideologized resilience, (2) cornered by private interests in ownership and environmental threats of the city’s degraded surroundings, (3) heightened by incongruencies in vulnerability and exemption offered by the statuses prolonged through non-private and private respectively, and (4) ignored to a point of crisis through the alienating nature of New Yorkers’ relationship with their environment as insulating and galvanizing. These are all detonators that unravel during the novel’s climax (the Hurricane that strikes them) and serve to motivate the majority to follow Franklin’s plan for financial strike. I discuss the hurricane incident in the following two paragraphs and Franklin’s plan in the second section of the analysis.

The last blow the communitarian whole suffers due to the above stated factors accumulated is a hurricane that propels Charlotte to lead an unsuccessful protest to claim the habilitation of private, vacant buildings that are exempt to the havoc of this phenomenon. It also corners all affected New Yorkers in Central Park and demonstrates that private corporations (including the venal mayor) do not care to defend the lives of the affected ones, but only their ulterior and unscrupulous, lucrative interests. Concerningly, despite the devastating hurricane that attacks New York, the city continues to be referred to as a place for which no individual feels sorry; “so the emotional, historical, and physical effects of the hurricane’s devastation were almost entirely local” (464). This is a general assumption the Citizen provides; however, when

one examines Charlotte, who is in direct contact and simultaneously suffering this crisis, the response of devastated New Yorkers takes on a rebellious plane. Namely, Charlotte finds herself in a desultory ambivalent state walking around the park, crying and seeing others experiencing the dire effects of the hurricane (467-468): trees that had taken decades to grow are gone, and a sense of environmental mourning and helpless exposure lies in the air (468). At some point in the midst of this disaster, Charlotte also vaguely recalls poetry by Walt Whitman, which seems to indicate she remembers that the fabric of New York city is comprised of diverse, hard-working citizens united by common experiences. This perhaps may not be Charlotte's realization alone, but everyone's in that park, which fills the necessary energy for a protest. After calling the mayor and confirming that his authority is nearly nonexistent to humanely respond to the emergency of the affected who are pleading to inhabit the vacant uptown towers so that they are home to the affected (468-470), Charlotte herself takes part in such protests, which may be the largest communal activity New York is engaged in. Thus, trapped within the publicness of environmental crisis and denied the occupancy of the private, vacant upper towers, New Yorkers are outraged enough to get involved in the strike that will articulate the unfairness of that elitist capitalism, a strike that will likely revive the sense that the commons need to be brought back if their inequities are to be remedied.

If You Can't Beat Them, *Lead* Them

As Charlotte is trapped in the middle of Central Park along with all the other New Yorkers and as she has dealt with crises driven by climate change for a long time, she decides to step up and channel everyone's outrage towards the reformation of capitalism. The sense of togetherness against such injustices and the genuine belonging to the proletariat are two factors that boost Charlotte's campaign. Indeed, Charlotte's speech starts by stating, "our much unloved Democratic Party has betrayed us yet again with the mayor's craven response to the hurricane" (515). In addition, her postulation, though powered by personal outrage, is puzzlingly filled with nonchalance and transparency. For instance, she states, "I'm only doing it because someone has to... so vote for me so, so I don't feel like more of an idiot than I already do" (506). However, she also offers a perspective that seems to resonate with the public: "I haven't climbed the ladder that the party requires of people (...) But that lack on my part is now an advantage, because that career track is part of what has made the Democratic party so weak (505). This lack of exposure to the system that seems to entrap politicians is reminiscent of Harding who refers to those in

charge as blinded by their own privilege (qtd. in Buckingham 394). As Buckingham further remarks “the privileged among women who are admitted to positions of power in climate change policy- and decision-making are, on current evidence, the highly educated and credentialized, typically with no dependents to care for or with the wherewithal to buy high quality care services” (394). Evidently, Charlotte is not this privileged since she does experience the unjust effects of climate change on the exposed ones. Her leadership signifies that change must come from outside those in power. Perhaps this change is even driven by a realization of what Merchant declares on a point where social ecology meets progressive and environmental movements, as they both “look beyond the individual to the social and environmental whole for values by which to restructure the world. For both visions, the environment and society are the living contexts of life” (*Radical* 133). Charlotte further identifies herself with everyone else as a ‘hard worker’ (506). This positions her as one more among the many: someone who will, for once, speak the atrocities the public suffers. This commitment and leadership are vastly the legacy of communitarian engagement after having lived the above explained events and by desiring to change the system. Here, then, converge the resilience based on models of place connectedness and the worn-out toleration of New Yorkers for the injustices of capitalism even despite the affordances of the city’s grandeur. This makes community a key element in reforming capitalism. But Robinson’s novel complementary shows that community activism and the will of the people are not enough to reform capitalism if financial systems themselves are not altered to work for the people and not against them, and if the people themselves, as well as capitalist systems, do not become more eco-sensitive. Thus, it is precisely towards those factors that we now turn our attention.

III. Analysis Part II: Finance and Eco-Sensitivity

This section analyzes the second set of characters: Franklin, Stefan and Roberto as crucial agents in understanding and reshaping the economic values of New York in the novel, and Amelia as the most eco-sensitive character whose commitments conflict with capitalistic tendencies to banalize causes (in her specific case, her body is sexualized while she advocates for animal rights). Franklin, being a successful and knowledgeable trader himself, shifts his investments from money-focused to people-focus through the plans he leads: the eelgrass project and the reformation of the capitalist elite system. Furthermore, Stefan and Roberto, perform what I identify as ‘ocean digging’ in their look for the ancient gold of *The Hussar* (a treasure ship that

sank back in 1780). This later is commodified to financially back up the reformation plan that Franklin proposes. Finally, the TV star Amelia takes advantage of the capitalist tendencies to sexualize causes to advocate fiercely for the prevention of animals' extinction. This section starts by tracing Franklin's character development. Then, it proceeds to broaden the conversation on how technologies aid New Yorkers to reconquer the domain of the sea, and what that implies for ecology and capitalism in the Anthropocene through the subsection "(il)liquidity shift." Moreover, an analysis of Franklin's plan is provided along with what such reformation means in the look of a radical ecology. In this same subsection, I also cover the ideological implications of capitalism within the city through a discussion on capitalism's hyperobjectivity. Subsequently, I address the link between capitalism and gender through the portrayed natural exploitation in what I call "ocean mining" which Stefan and Roberto aid, and through the sexualization of Amelia's image during her advocacy for animal rights. Finally, the analysis focuses on "models of ideological sustainability," which gives an overview of divergent types of ecology and of finance that can substitute their ongoing models.

A. New Technologies, New Possibilities, New Projects

I needed to find a means to reverse the usual way of the world. Instead of financializing value, I needed to add value to finance. That was at first beyond me to conceptualize. How could you add more value to finance, when finance existed to financialize value? In other words, how could it be about more than money, when money was the ultimate source of value itself? And I began to see it in a new way, as something like this: it had to mean something. Finance, or even just life; it had to mean something. And meaning had no price. It could not be priced. It was some kind of alternative form of value (257-258).

The quotation above unquestionably portrays a money-centered worldview that lacks intrinsic value beyond monetization which seems to be characteristic of money-oriented New Yorkers like Franklin. In the novel, the technological advancements by the year 2140 are such that Franklin's office is a version of the world in digital statistics; from spreadsheets and graphs to satellite-millimetric sensors and other acutely detailed indicators, he keeps track of the drowned coastlines, housing indexes and sea level rises, all of which influence finance. Indeed, as an employee of the company *WaterPrice*, he devised something called the Intertidal Property Pricing Index (IPPI), which is said to be "used by millions to orient investment that totaled in the

trillions” (22). In his world view, sea level is fundamental in distinguishing a good investment from a collapsing building, so water level was added to the equations of other derivatives and commodities. Moreover, Franklin is conniving at the beginning of the novel with stratagems such as the following: “sea level in the Philippines up two centimeters, huge, people panicking, but not noticing the typhoon developing a thousand kilometers to the south: take a moment to buy their fear, before tweaking the index to register the explanation. High-frequency geofinance, the greatest game!” (23). It is axiomatic, then, that Finance is a game, or a business of outsmarting others (including the victims of such occurrences), as he argues later with his friend Jojo (69). Hence, his job is an avenue to profit from other people’s mishaps and terror, which as he admits was strenuously galvanized by the traumas of the Pulses and the threat they have posed to predictability (also read stability): ‘past performance was no guarantee of future anything,” he asserts (22). Nonetheless, his interactions with Jojo lead him to realize that he may be stuck in conservative ideals for sole profiting without the slight interest in enhancing the world around him (205). Such an insight from his progressive friend allows Franklin to utter the words that open this chapter on finance; consequently, he begins to interiorize a way to embed meaning in his investments, an initiative that he takes on two projects.

The first project manifests an interest in reappropriating the lost domain to the sea, that is, reconquering of spaces that have been overtaken by nature. This suggests that capitalism need not disappear in order to be redirected to human-centered activities that benefit a larger part of the population. The project is called “eelgrass housing,” and it starts with Franklin’s interest in utilizing the technologies available to anticipate the collapse of buildings and halting such with technological fixes (258). However, Franklin does not stop there; he realizes that buildings are flimsy and vulnerable to the risks of water especially in the intertidal zone where they are all heading towards a submerged decay. This simultaneously juxtaposes humans and nature: “in the eternal battle of men against sea, which antagonist was winning? The sea was always the same, while improvements were being made in humanity’s ramparts; but the sea was relentless” (260). Indeed, it could be said that nature is positioned superjacent to humanity: this is why Franklin regards all venture capital⁹ Jojo engages in as sisyphian. It further violates the quintessential law of always growing that took its best expression in the architectural design of New York by 2140

⁹ Defined as “Capital whose owners are willing to invest in new or small businesses, where the risk of losing it is high” (Dictionary of Finance and Banking).

taking upwards with illusion of never ending, as Franklin comments (262). It is during a conversation with his former role model Mr. Hector Ramirez that Franklin presents a shift in strategy from the traditional embedding of resilience in buildings so that they stand *against* the forces of the sea, or alternatively “retreating to higher ground,” to embedding structural adaptations in buildings so that they *obey* the motions of the ocean. Theoretically, the eelgrass housing (or “aquaculture”) would not only permeate the buildings but give them flexibility and stability by being anchored to bedrock bollards. This envisages a considerable Manhattan-size block that resembles a houseboat (265), an idea that naturally requires venture capital. While this project has a more ostensibly communitarian focus, it is important not to forget that it is being funded, it is still “capital;” thus, it engages the readers’ imagination in the new form of capitalism, one that is used to ensure life instead of threatening it or being impervious to the needs of people just as it happened with Charlotte and the protests she led. There are, however, a couple of implications this project possesses in regards to capitalism and the ways it appropriates land.

First, the spatial imagination of the eelgrass project is something that must be revised as it is still capitalistic. As Morton remarks, “‘Henri Lefebvre pioneered the idea that capitalism *produced* certain kinds of space and spatiotemporal relations.’ [Hence,] capitalism does not simply construct ideas about space; it creates actually existing and concrete spaces” (qtd. 85 original emphasis). This suggests that reconquering the sea, while it does have a focus on being home to New Yorkers, is still a matter of production. It further implies deploying technologies that are available within the novel to make a long-term investment or, as Ameen argues, “aiming to take this space into private possession for better future management” (1339). In addition, this projection of space, or as Morton would call it “empty space,¹⁰” is vital due to its potential in generating profit, which supersedes spaces already in use (86). In other words, the profitable potential of this drowned areas is more appealing and ‘intrinsic’ to capitalism, which leads me to conclude that capitalism is not necessarily being destroyed, but rather redirected to more communitarian purposes through a reformation. The solution to the injustices experienced by New Yorkers seems to have more of a social focus, where everyone’s needs are met rather than uprooting capitalism.

¹⁰ For Morton, it is “space that has capitalism has left relatively undeveloped” (Ecology Without Nature 86)

Since capitalism remains “alive” and working, a second implication for the spatial imagination has to do with the negligence to recognize the immediacy of climate phenomena. This is better explained through Schmitt’s system of “orientation and order” (or “Nomos”) in which he argues that “Nomos [is] the immediate form in which the political and social order of a people becomes spatially visible” (qtd. in Ameen 1330). In this regard, Franklin’s project is another extension of an obsession for adamantly orienting space as reifications of ‘political social order,’ this time underwater and adapting fluidly to the currents of water. It is similar to an ‘oceanic’ appropriation that will circumlocute a fundamental change in the principles of capitalism. By the same token, one must not forget what Morton warns that “contemporary capitalism seeks to ‘annihilate space by time’ – and then to collapse time itself. When we consider it thus, the postmodern insistence on space is a high-cultural denial, a mystification rather than a theoretical breakthrough, flat-out contradicting objective conditions rather than expressing them (Harvey qtd. in Morton 85).” These new spaces, then, are expressions of a reformed capitalism that is mutually shaped and endorsed by political forces and communitarian engagements, yet capitalism is not contradicted since the issues it creates are thought to emerge from its elitist expression, rather than from the mere fact of being capitalist. As discussed in the previous chapter, the community engagement grows upon seeing the threats of privatization and environmental peril, plus the political involvement of Charlotte as a representative of the people. These factors all push to alternative ways of allocating the benefits of the capital and, more importantly, they push to stretch the imagination of space inhabitation which is evidently unfair and unequal for most New Yorkers in the novel. In this case, Franklin is, in his own way, stretching that spatial imagination by reconquering the sea through fluid structures that are no longer resisting, but adapting. Franklin, then, is Robinson’s vehicle to transmit the idea that capitalism need not be destroyed but adapted to serve more comprehensive and meaningful ends. Even in this reform the aforementioned implications of space and production can continue as long as capitalism serves a larger purpose, ‘an alternative form of value.’ For Franklin, this reform also occurs with his focus of inserting meaning into his work through what I term a (il)liquid shift, a change of perspective of how to allocate resources so that more people can benefit from opportunities and ideas that capitalism can provide.

The (Il)liquidity Shift

To understand this “(il)liquid shift,” Franklin’s explanations of the liquidity and illiquidity in the world of *New York 2140* are pivotal. When conversing with Charlotte, he links stability to illiquidity by explaining that people seek stability by ensuring themselves assets such as housing, employment, and health. Thus, terms such as mortgage payments and health insurances are the main canals to negotiate the stability that these assets procure to individuals. In short, if people pay for these assets, they get the benefits they provide; for example, they pay rent so that they have a place to shelter and sleep. In this discussion, we can understand stability and liquidity almost as synonyms for the inhabitants of New York. On the other hand, *liquidity*, understood as the quality of an asset to retain its value, is what finance benefits from, according to Franklin, since it takes advantage of people’s continuous payments to borrow money and invest in private markets. Franklin further explains that the ‘stretch’ between people’s payments and the investments finance makes through such borrowings enables them to multiply finance’s earnings and profit colossally (320). Given the contraposition of illiquidity and liquidity and given the fact that Franklin’s focus changes from money-centered to people centered, it is important to revise his attitude in the novel as well.

Franklin regards all factors that may diminish illiquidity as the ultimate threat to business at the beginning of the novel. In fact, that is the reason why he deems Jojo as emotionally involved and somewhat naively lost in investments of that kind (257); it is the reason why he does not dare funding venture capital. He deems it “a cardinal sin” (256). Nonetheless, with the determination to change “the usual way of the world” and finding out that meaning could not be priced for their must be an ‘alternative form of value’ (257), he ventures to device and speak grandiloquently of eelgrass housing and even fund it. Given this turn, I would suggest that the way to embed meaning in his finance, according to Franklin’s actions, is to preserve and amplify the number of structures that provide stability to New Yorkers’ lives. Indeed, upon the threats of water decay, the buildings are essential to maintain the homocentric patterns of life. The novel seems to present a juxtaposition of common and private structures alluding to have the potentials of giving life or taking it away respectively. However, in reality, it is the investment of a capital in projects that ascertains life that makes capitalism capable of ‘undrown’ areas and lead towards a certain vitality. Thus far, this section on finance has argued that capitalism can not only undrown places, putting them back in the system (in short revitalizing them), but also capitalism is capable of embedding meaning by shifting the focus of capitalism from that of an elite, to a

commonwealth. As Ameel argues, “*New York 2140* describes liquidity as a metaphorization for capitalism’s power to restrict and direct human agency within monetized relationships” (1337). It can be concluded that to create meaning beyond such ‘monetized relationships’ is to understand that a finance that works must sustain the preservation of all human life, at least in *New York 2140*. In short, to extricate from such ‘monetized relationships’ a shift from “capitalism for some” to “capitalism for many” is mandatory and that is achieved through meaning embeddedness in stability, which leads the path, as Ameel would say, “for a renewed sense of the commons” (1336). Franklin’s realization (or shift) that meaning can be embedded in his work by assuring that stability in people’s lives maybe viewed as only an initiative if he works towards a reformation alone. However, he is not alone as the community is gaining agency with the threats explained in chapter one. Indeed, the change he envisions for the capitalist system requires everyone’s participation since Franklin wants to carefully manipulate the mechanism of capitalism, to redirect the wealth of a few and turn it into the wealth of many. His plan is a matter of “the more, the merrier,” just like the Part Seven of the novel is titled.

B. The Plan to Reform Capitalism

This plan is impelled by a very meaningful realization: the capitalist system may be made of many entities, but the most important of all of them is people. Hence, if people refuse to perpetuate the same unequal system, it must morph in its need to remain ‘alive.’ Therefore, Franklin’s plan follows this logic: “If liquidity relies on a steady payment stream of ordinary people, which it does, then you could crash the system any time you wanted, by people stopping their payments” (322). The plan, then, entails organizing a tumultuous financial strike (a financial coup d’état) as to make investors fall through the beneficial gap they create with the borrowings and investments on private markets.¹¹ The plan not only envisions “the end of financial civilization,” but it will also prevent banks from intervening through a bail-out money injection that usually has the goal of to getting the system back and running, as Franklin comments (203). It ensures all New Yorkers that such recurrent capitalistic intervention can be prevented by making sure that the government responds to their strike by nationalizing the banks. Franklin explains the mechanisms behind it:

¹¹ As it was explained above, in the novel it is said that finance profits from people’s stream of continuous payments by borrowing money and then, investing larger amounts of money on private market.

Because when the crash comes, the government needs to nationalize the banks. No more bailing them out and forcing taxpayers to foot the bill. You would gather all the big banks and investment firms. They'll be panicked but they'll also be saying, give us all the money we've lost or the whole economy crashes. They'll demand it. But this time the feds have to say, yeah sure, we'll save your ass, we'll reboot finance with a giant infusion of public money but now we own you. You're now working for the people, meaning the government. Then you make them start making loans again. They become like arms of a federal octopus. Credit unions. At that point finance is back in action, but its profits go to the public. They work for us, we invest in what seems good. Whatever happens, the results are ours (392).

The governmental turn from private to public investment is another compelling reason to argue that *New York 2140* is about reforming capitalism since the big societal change aimed at is for New York to find expressions in the common will with a focus on commonwealth. Franklin's plan is a way to manipulate the peril of privatization to serve more communitarian ends. Once again, it is a plan that uses the existing capitalist structures to create change, powered by the common outrage of injustices and the collaboratively carried out by individual forces. Nonetheless, New Yorkers should be wary of believing the change they achieve will be everlasting since ideologies remain in people and capitalism on its own is a hyperobject, a complicated phenomenon that no one fully comprehends.

Regarding how the elitist capitalism may come back and its significance to its hyperobjectivity, it is worth remarking the role of 'emergent properties.'¹² Emergent properties simultaneously explain why a capitalist system worked for an elite and why it can potentially work for it again. Regarding the former, Franklin regards the system as something possessing a "hive mind, but no mind" (201) in which most people remain unaware of the mechanisms of the system yet partake in the maintenance of it through their indirect involvement. This may be why the strike and the plan as a whole are a matter of "the more, the merrier." This resonates with Barak's mention in *Something in The Way of Things*, "a paranoiac, surrealist glimpse of

¹² Simply put, "emergent properties" is a concept used to describe the accruing contribution of individual factors to a greater whole. Examples of these are memories (a collection of neurons holding up a particular moment) and cities (a collection of buildings, which in its entirety make a city). See more at <https://sciencing.com/emergent-properties-8232868.html>

something that cannot quite be seen, something found along the way that also gets in the way, playing on the two senses of ‘in the way’” (qtd. in Morton 88). In the light of Barak’s argument and the suggestive role of emergent properties, New Yorkers have long participated in the making of an elitist capitalism. They participate in the reformation of the capitalist system and may also participate in a regression towards an elitist capitalism. The possibilities of regression are more prominently a matter of capitalism’s hyperobjectivity.

It is plausible that the elitist system returns as the Citizen preaches after the economic crash has occurred. Towards the end of the novel, he warns readers to remember that this system is, first, a ‘hyperobject’ that cannot be fully comprehended and claiming to fully comprehend it may in turn engage people in ease of representation. Second, Citizen also advises the reader in that even though the nationalization of finance meant implementation of new taxes, which were allocated to universal health care, free public education, guaranteed employment, among other welfare-state benefits (551), this “utopian” happy ending is not an ending ‘for there are no endings” and “things happened, history happened” (552). Hence, his last concluding commentary in/about the novel is a reminder to the readers that history may repeat itself despite the auspicious world that strike created. In other words, that strike may have taken down the financial civilization for the elite, but that elitist capitalism may eventually reemerge as ideologies do not disappear as easily, a point even Morton warns by remarking that “before and after the work of capital, there persists a curious silence and absence marked by traces of misery and oppression” (86). With the role of emergent properties and the fact that capitalism is not fully comprehensible to anyone, this reformation is not something to be taken for granted.

In a similar way, while society may change the distribution of wealth in the state they live in, capitalism engages in other dire behaviors that ought to be changed such as the commodification of causes. Prime examples of these are offered by Roberto and Stefan’s ocean mining and Amelia’s body sexualization, both of which reveal the role of gender in a capitalism that must not be deemed as fully repaired or fixed by neither the readers nor New Yorkers in the novel.

C. Commodification of Causes

Used instrumentally, both the action of mining the ocean and the sexualization of causes are realities that Stefan, Roberto and Amelia use respectively to bring about the change they desire to enact. On the one hand, mining the ocean entails digging through the dire past of the

Anthropocene that lies just a few feet underwater in the intertidal zone. On the other hand, however, the sexualization of causes is a reality that Amelia constantly deals with, yet simultaneously endorses as she sees her body as an instrument to lure her audience into carrying and investing into a worthwhile cause, the preservation of species.

Ocean Mining

Although direct contact with the water is substantially not advised due to its toxic composition, such is not an issue for the orphans Roberto and Stefan, the story's main shipwreck hunters, who try their best with their dry suits and rudimentary equipment. Their main contribution to the reformation of capitalism is the originally alleged finding of "The HMS *Hussar*," which they agree to disinter by digging the detritus under the ocean (60). During their conversation with Mr. Hexter,¹³ they realize the treasure must indeed be thirty to forty feet under the sea (111). In their performative characterization, Stefan and Roberto complementary serve to connect other characters due to their mischievous adventures in shipwreck hunting and other perilous adventures. It is through inadvertent meetings that they meet Franklin who rescues them from their self-exposed danger, Charlotte who offers the MetLife building to be their home, and Vlade whose friend Idelba possesses and offers the proper equipment to "mine" the ocean. In further conversation with Mr. Hexter, the orphans learn that the treasure of the ship corresponds to "four million dollars of gold coins to pay British soldiers [approximately two billion dollars by 2140], in two wooden chests bound with iron hoops (110), which belonged to Captain Maurice Pole back in 1780, who had a shipwreck and lost its treasure to the bottom of the ocean along with the famous *Hussar* ship. The unburying of this treasure can be seen in two ways: first, as the fuel to power the House Holder Union strike and achieve the commonwealth economy; second, as a dystopian exploitation of the natural world.

The excavation propels the characters agency at the expense of nature since the gold augments their possibilities to enact the desired changed. After successfully retrieving the gold coins, Stefan and Roberto immediately ask for their ownership, which indicates their knowledge about private assets; it gives them certain agency in turn as Ameel comments:

¹³ Though indeed a secondary character, Mr. Hexter is the provider of maps for Stefan and Roberto to undergo their adventure of finding the *Hussar*. He eventually becomes a resident of the MetLife building as he is victim of having his home collapse due to the water in the intertidal zone.

For the protagonists, a growing sense of agency comes from their ability to capitalize on the waterfront and to extract liquid value from the flux of the intertidal, to become able to gain ownership and to hold on to it, and to turn ‘illiquid’ assets (such as the treasure of the Hussar wreck) into ‘liquid’ value, even if this means turning communal property into private property (1340).

What is tantalizing about this agency is the transformation of assets believed to be communal, since they lay in the depths of the ocean, to privatize through the process of commodification. While Stefan and Roberto’s desire is to memorialize their findings by giving the coins to a museum, the adults have “better” plans: they will use the treasure to create a fund that will support the Householder’s Union in its strike.¹⁴ For this to happen, they would melt them and sell them. While exploiting nature is evidently used to support the desired change, it is not the only capitalist tendency that the characters manipulate to reform capitalism.

However, auspicious this utilization of gold is alluded to, there is a clear reference that new technologies surpass the levels of natural exploitation with little regard to the natural world and its preservation. During the excavation that Idelba leads, technological advancements such as radars, sonars and a nozzle drill excel. These images of new technology achieving something unprecedented resonate with Tarbill et al., who, in discussing the usage of technological imagery to foster natural exploitation, argue that these new technologies “finally [achieve] access [to] what she [nature] has been hiding” (10). Furthermore, the imagery of what is decayed and submerged is most acutely underlined in the narration of this mission. For instance, once they start using the massive vacuum to get rid of the debris, “the familiar stink of anoxia filled the air, one of the smells of the city, here at its nastiest. They all wrinkled their noses and continued looking” (281). The submerged disaster of the devastations of the Anthropocene continues to surface, but their attitude demonstrates their ambition towards money as they continue even when the ‘stench’ is ‘pervasive and ugly’ (282). To accentuate this ambition, other submerged, environmental elements are described with an unappealing tone, as for example:

Usually it was lumps of concrete or asphalt, sometimes soggy wood, which they inspected more closely; other times broken stones, or chunks of what looked like ceramic. A goat’s horn, a complete furry body of a raccoon or skunk maybe, giant

¹⁴ While the plan is originally proposed by Franklin, it is enhanced by Charlotte, Amelia and other characters in the novel who are not analyzed in this thesis.

clamshells, a big square bottle not broken, a fishing gaff, a drowned doll, many broken stones (282).

The rather strong detachment from seeing long drowned animals and twenty-first century elements such as the doll and fishing gaff may imply that digging into their (now oceanic) past is fine and justifiable as long as there is a reward. Their adamancy is clear: “the smell was sickening but none minded” (284). More prominently, although a considerable amount of time has transpired since the scientific revolution (1543- 1687), the controlling imagery of nature as ‘mother’ has been kept.¹⁵ For example, Franklin remarks, “Mother Ocean can’t be beat. And it’s turning out to be the toughest to fight her in the intertidal” (265). This leads me to suggest that this mining of the ocean preserves a similar mechanistic ideology as the one that, as Merchant argues, disconnects people from a ‘restraining ethic’ allowing humans to “dig into her entrails for gold” (qtd. in Warren 186). As a matter of fact, this violation of nature oftentimes goes unnoticed since, as Morton disabuses, “commodities behave as if they sprang from nowhere, from some wheel of fortune in outer space” (88), which indicates further consideration must be given to what is envisioned as ‘violable’ space within the city and what behaviors should be changed if a better ecology was to be achieved. Subsequently, Stefan and Roberto’s adventurous and somewhat courageous deed is another expression of capitalist tenacity in the look for fuel to revolutionize itself through female land (also read oceanic) exploitation. The characters are looking for a kind of energy to galvanize their plan. Another important point of this ocean mining is raised by Tarbill et.al., when discussing the sexualization of advertisements for oil-extracting purposes. They clarify that “while feminizing the planet this way may appear to uplift womanhood or femininity, the other side of feminizing the environment is subjecting the land [and ocean in this case] to violence as if it were a difficult woman” (10). They follow the same line of thought as Merchant did in reading Bacon’s imperative to enslave (female) nature so that it could be controlled making men reach its innermost secrets (8). This reinforces my claim that ocean digging perpetuates an exploitative relationship with nature in the novel, and while that fact may not be directly targeted in the novel, it is a capitalist behavior that survives even when

¹⁵ Naturally, Merchant’s *Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* is a revolutionary text of the late twentieth century that has no direct link with a *fictional* work here analyzed (*New York 2140*). This argument, then, takes root from the premise of imagining the world of 2140 as a continuation of the current paradigm of 2021. I am, by no means, assuming that both works are grounded on reality; I only aim at visualizing the exploitation of nature within the fictional world.

the wealth distribution caused by Franklin's plan succeeds. As will be argued later, deep ecologists may understandably have a problem with this kind of behavior where nature is not recognized as a respectable being but serves capitalist ends with exploited resources that ostensibly 'spring out of nowhere.' The most novel difference in the novel is that the oceanic digging serves a larger purpose: to finance the Householder's Union so that everyone sees the strike as viable option in achieving that the resources be available and used by the majority of the population. A last factor that this capitalism reformation fails to address is the sexualization of Amelia's body, which she instrumentalizes to lure consumers into caring for an intrinsically good cause such as animal rights.

Sexualized Environmental Involvement

The importance of gender in capitalism not only surfaces through the exploitation of a "mother ocean," but also through the direct sexualization of Amelia's body while she tries to raise awareness for animal advocacy. The conflicting dual reality of Amelia offers good grounds for discussion of ecological motivations within a commodified world since she genuinely cares about animals' survival, yet her image is being sold and sexualized to her audience by her producers. In short, Amelia is a T.V star who flies across the globe in her ship called *Assisted Migration* broadcasting a 'cloud show' about "assisting the migration of endangered species to ecozones where they were more likely to survive the changed-climate" (40). Nonetheless, no sooner is this definition given than her sexualization is brought up in the novel; for instance, while wearing a red sleeveless dress during her show, it is said that there are enthusiasts who fantasize about her taking the dress off (41), and even her producer Nicole warns her that unless she loses some clothing, she will lose viewers (42). Undoubtedly, the tendency of capitalism to sexualize a cause through the manufacturing of an attractive woman pervades even when it is something that has long been decried, for instance, as Jean Kilbourne in *Killing Us Softly*¹⁶ did back in 1979. In addition, despite the fact that Amelia does play the role of a polemical star with direct—at points optimistically naïve—commentary to the camera during her expeditions and despite her awareness of her image being sexualized to approximately thirty-two million viewers, she is keen to pinpoint the role of her job to prevent animal extinction and the

¹⁶ While *Killing Us Softly* targets advertisement mainly, it is a fact that the portrayal of women in television seeps in other areas such as T.V. and Internet broadcasting shows.

importance of attempting to fix the ecological disruptions that have transpired (241). She even acknowledges being used by consumers but with a hopeful end:

I go along with that because I think it might help, even though sometimes it scares me to death, and it's embarrassing too. But to the extent it gets people thinking about these projects, it's helping the cause. It's part of the larger thing that we have to do. That's how I think of it, and I would do anything to make it succeed. I would hang naked upside down above a bay of hungry sharks if that would help the cause, and you know I would because that was one of my most popular episodes. Maybe it's stupid that it was to be that way, maybe I'm stupid for doing it, but what matters is getting people to pay attention, and then to act (241).

The fact that she uses her female sexualization in order to awaken collective awareness speaks highly of her eco-sensitivity and commitment to environmental amelioration on the surface while simultaneously decries the capitalism of the masses for objectifying her. At this point, it becomes clear that capitalism does survive in commodifying everything on its way despite the reallocation of wealth. For example, Franklin commodifies water and building through venture capital, Stefan and Roberto explicitly commodify from water, and Amelia does so from her body, but the usage of her body is more instrumental than the ocean digging. One interesting intricacy of Amelia's actions lies in her sense of (animal) ecofeminist interspecies advocacy which, as Gaard remarks, is at the core of feminist thought since feminism is about justice and liberation from oppressing conditions; foundations that can be extended to animals (115). In her words, "ecofeminist also recognize the issue as an opportunity to build coalitions among animal advocates, feminists, small farmers, consumer advocates and environmentalist alike" (Gaard qtd. in Gaard 116). As a result, I would propose that her stratagem is to use of some of capitalism's own mechanisms against itself with the aim of leading to its reformation. In other words, revolutionizing ideas must break through the existing conditions so that a change can be attained. However, Amelia's struggle also raises an important point: that those in power and comfortable with the current state of affairs are powerful individuals whose actions can become as radical as wiping out species as long as their ideals are preserved.

Not only does Amelia struggle with the pressing sexualization of her body, but also fights a group of radicals called "The Antarctic Defense League" who thwart an important migration of polar bears. This is another instance wherein capitalism is objected to for its reductionist

tendencies. Similarly, it is also the second factor that causes Amelia's initially superfluous characterization to emerge as eco-sensitive. In the novel, Amelia conducts a migration of polar bears to the last place they may stand a chance to survive, the Antarctic. As she heads to the Antarctic, she openly recognizes to her audience that such migration is something never seen before, "polar bears and penguins in the same environment!" (236). The mindset is that while it is certainly a disruption to introduce a top predator in an environment so that it decimates the Weddell Seals and balances 'population dynamics' (239), it is their very last chance of survival. Unfortunately, these polar bears are swiftly nuked by an extremist group "The Antarctic Defense League" shortly after having been released. This group is comprised of wealthy advocates of purity that refute the idea of preservation due a firm rejection in altering an alleged "purity of the world." Truly, this suggests that power and supremacy are factors rather present in the elitist group that is fighting for the preservation of the current capitalist system, who resist change. Amelia mourningly comments on their actions as follows:

I've watched them and listened to them. And they all have more money than they really need, and so they go crazy. And they think everyone else is wrong cause they aren't as pure as they are ... I hate their self-righteousness about their so-called purity.... There's no such a thing as purity. It's an idea in the heads of religious fanatics, the kind of people who kill because they are so good and righteous. I hate those people (242).

In this occasion, polarized views are attached to conflicting discourses of righteousness and, in so doing, they exhibit that the elitist capitalism will not care to ensure (non) human lives – just as that very system neglected the occupancy of vacant towers to Charlotte and other citizens in Central Park in the midst of a crises. This contraposes capitalism as reductionist to Amelia's eco-sensitivity as advocate of diversity, even in and the face of extreme dystopian circumstances. In short, it is another way to demonstrate, through her sexualized image in her program, that the real problem is not the lack of good actions and intentions, but rather the power and self-adjudicated righteousness of the wealthy and their little regard for life in the look of nonstop profit. The last important aspect *New York 2140* raises in regards to transforming capitalism for the better is the way it interacts with political discourses and how it is sold to people as the only viable option.

D. Political Criticism of Capitalism

Robinson alludes to the ancestry and prevailing dominance of capitalism through the Citizen's assertion that no one, not even bankers, fully comprehends the system: "It grew in the dark, it's a stack, a hyperobject, an accidental megastructure. No single individual can know any one of these megastructures, much less the mega-megastructure that is the global system entire, the system of all systems" (301). In other words, capitalism is such an old system that imagining a new model that supersedes it is nearly impossible. Indeed, this point is severely complicated when capitalism is politicized. Evan's and Reid's term "ecologization of the political" (162) expands on this when they talk about how neoliberalism is used to entice individuals to perpetuate the capitalist system. They suggest that, upon the threat of catastrophism (i.e., a discourse that sells catastrophe as inevitable), neoliberalism is dually the *problem* as it is the exploitative perpetrator of nature, and – later – the alleged *solution* because it disguises as the only viable option. The political practice of neoliberalism is to present a solution that entails profit and appeals sustainable and rightful¹⁷ (149). This idea of having the ecological politicized can be seen throughout the entirety of the novel. For instance, the community is cornered by privatization and the residents of the MetLife building were very close to selling their residence. Another example lies in Franklin's eelgrass project and in Amelia's work since they both profit from their doing even when it is directed towards a more positive cause. What is crucial to remark here is that, throughout the novel, capitalism does not necessarily surface as intrinsically bad even when it is disguised as the politically correct choice. Instead, capitalism can (and will) remain but it must be redirected towards the preservation of life along with a new ethic for a new ecology, a radical one. Despite the fact that neoliberalism is a dual-sided ideology, other politics are proposed as forms of ecological, more people-centered ideologies, and these encompass the last criticism of capitalism I analyze in this thesis.

Models of Ideological Sustainability

The last critique of capitalism tackles theory and practice of capital tenets. It is further accompanied by alternative visions that entail reshaping capitalism into a sustainable model. This occurs through Amelia who, after the incident regarding the polar bears, becomes reticent to her audience and immersed in thought. To aid her train of thought she resorts to a recording by

¹⁷ "Ecologizing the political" includes appropriating a narrative of sustainability with the end of profiting from it within private markets. This excludes the government while simultaneously "catastrophism" diminishes its power in intervening for everyone's sake.

her former undergraduate advisor Lucky Jeff who explains humans' fascination for simplified matter in the face of complexity. He also explains in the recorded lecture that the principle of "the more the merrier" drives profit to economy, and that, in theory, it is "supposed to allow everyone to maximize their own value. [Yet,] in practice it's put us into a mass extinction event. Persist in it, and it would wreck everything" (332). This is something I have argued thus far in elucidating why capitalism is not being destroyed but rather reformed. Shortly afterwards, the in-text lecturer explores alternative ways for 'master' or golden rules that could lead collective behavior. He theorizes off the ideal "the greatest good of the greatest number" to propose the 'Leopoldian land ethic': "what's good is what's good for the land." This proposition aligns itself with a model akin to an agrarian redux, that saves a sustainable future for coming generations (332). Certainly, this is a sustainable model of development based on the main tenet of deep ecology: to solve 'the conflict between the ecological and mechanistic worldview'¹⁸ (Merchant *Radical* 146). In so doing, deep ecology also envisions a transformation of "the worldview and reclaiming of spiritual connections to earth" (146), through a more eco-centric ethic. Nonetheless, it may be possible that Amelia deems this preposterous as she soars the world looking down at Russia mostly melted and reflecting on a better model of development that is not so improbable. Subsequently, Amelia's epiphany of a more functional reform is homocentric: "What's good is what's good for the people. That was maybe what people meant when they talked about the greatest good for the greatest number – number of people, they meant" (333). Consequently, this seems to be renouncing the deep ecology ideal to focus on social ecology, in which it is understood that the problem emanates from "[a] dialect between society (especially economies) and ecology" (Merchant *Radical* 142). Indeed, I dare suggest that this shift evinces how quixotic deep ecology is at its core as it plans on removing the mechanistic worldview that has prevailed for more than 400 years (by the year 2140) and replace it with a spiritual view; shortly put, the mechanistic worldview has been part of the collective consciousness for too long to reorient society towards it. Finally, while it may be true that social ecology, in the eyes of deep ecologists, lacks a "transpersonal or ecological self," as Merchant indicates (*Radical* 153), and while Amelia is known for her eco-sensitivity, it is essential to recognize the realistic mindset she has so that a viable, social ecology can be foregrounded.

¹⁸ Must be remembered that the mechanistic worldview referred to here is the shift from organic to mechanistic ethics towards nature, a shift that render nature death and prompted it to be exploited through the scientific methods.

Amelia's advocacy for social ecology does not necessitate relinquishment from her eco-motivations. For Amelia, what truly fosters a feeling of commitment similar to Charlotte's community engagement and Franklin's illiquid shift is the state of emergency, the loss of biodiversity, and ecological devastation that the new hurricane entails: "something turned in her" (482). Indeed, her realization of people's role in contributing to a better, more functional ecology is such that she gives a live call to arms in her program that decries the injustices of having vacant residential, which could be turned into refuges for the people who have lost their homes in the hurricane. She further exposes that those buildings are a façade for the New York grandeur of an elite that is utterly impervious to the dire hurricane. Her big blow to call her audience for a revolution reads as follows:

"So you know what? I'm sick of the rich. I just am. I'm sick of them running this whole planet for themselves. They're wrecking it! So I think we should take it back, and take care of it. And take of each other as part of that. No more table scraps. You know that Householder's Union that I was telling you about? I think it's time for everyone to Join that union, and for that union to go on strike. An everybody strike. I think there should be an everybody strike. Now. Today..." (482).

A sense of outrage and optimism resonates in the above quotation, yet the speech is discursively articulated as to awaken collective outrage, to claim that everyone – regardless of their position and motivations– has a reason to change the current capitalist system. Moreover, as she continues her speech, Charlotte and Franklin call her and aid her with lines that will elucidate the plan even further to her audience. She explains that the strike is a "fiscal noncompliance [movement]. It uses the power of money against money" and she promises that everyone who does not pay their debts is automatically a full member of the Householder Union "because at this point it is democracy versus capitalism. We the people have to band together and take over" (484). From this character affluence, the convergence that is the most meaningful is the advent of community being under attack and the ecological attempts to prevent the extinction of species being both equally futile against the capitalist system that does not respond to the sense of life-threatening emergency of either human or nonhuman life. Indeed, seen from dialectic stance, the characters find themselves in a situation propelled by the tension between the affordances of the rich, who are not affected in the slightest by the hurricane (the thesis), and the shared poverty

and outrage of the crisis (antithesis). The synthesis is reified by the revolution of economic system that turns a linear, vertical system into a horizontal one.

When categorizing this reformation within the movements of social, socialist, or state socialism (ecological) movements, we must have some precautions. As has been argued, this reformation is achieved by three different drives (communitarian, financial, and ecological). Their combination renders categorizing it within these three movements somewhat misleading. For example, it may be thought to be a move towards socialist ecology, which “envisions an economic transformation to ecological socialism, *initiated by new green social moments*” (Merchant 146 emphasis added) on the one hand. However, the reformation is only *partly* fueled by a green movement if Amelia’s is considered to be one. Similarly, this reformation presents a dialectic theory akin to O’ Connor’s *socialist* ecological theory in which he envisions two capitalist contradictions. The first one between ‘forces of production’ and ‘the relations of production’ (based on the *traditional* Marxian dialectic); the second one, a contradiction between ‘production and environmental conditions,’ which corresponds more to *ecological* Marxist dialectic (qtd. in Merchant 147). Nonetheless, the contradictions of capitalism in the novel do deprive the public of their security as it is axiomatic in the community’s outrage and participation in the strike, but it does not comply fully with how Merchant views these movements and how they contribute to change:

In traditional Marxism, the agencies of social transformation are the traditional labor and socialist movements that change the relations of production, through collective bargaining for example. Here *economic crises* make it possible to imagine the transition to socialism. In ecological Marxism, instead, the agencies of social transformation are the new ecological social movements: environmental health and safety, farmworker’s antipesticide coalitions... Here it is *ecological crises* that make it possible to imagine the transition to socialism (149 emphasis added).

Merchant’s depiction of these two types of Marxist tradition makes Robinson’s novel fall somewhere between her parallels as the community and ecological drives seem to manipulate the financialization of elitist capitalist system. In turn, this manipulation does generate an economic crisis, but as Amelia comments, “it uses the power of money against money” generating a crisis which certainly “push[es] capitalism to respond in more transparently social and potentially

socialist ways” (Merchant *Radical* 149). A final consideration to have regards state socialism since “their planning process nationalize production rather than democratizing and socializing it” (148). Given this, we may want to inquire what problems the nationalization of banks in the novel is aimed at to solve. Moreover, the radical ecology portrayed in *New York 2140* is mostly concerned with a social vision that may be committed to responding to certain social inequalities that correspond to social ecology as claimed above, but they may simultaneously fail to extricate nature from its enslavement. Thus, state socialism would continue to operate in capitalistic ways. When contrasted with a movement such as deep ecology, this reformation of capitalism appeals rather futile since it perpetuates the ecological paradigm of exploitation turning its back against the deep ecologist and even against the ideal portraits of social ecologists who seek non-hierarchical “organizations” and emancipation from systemic disenfranchisement, as does even an anarchist social ecology (143).

Despite the novels’ ambiguous positioning within these movements as explained by Merchant, I concur with her words on social ecology to argue that the novel belongs to social ecology as it “support[s] an ecologically-based development policy that uses resources in a sustainable way while raising the quality of life and redistributing the means of fulfilling basic needs” (145). Controversially, while aspects in the ideal portrait of socialist ecology where “nature will be recognized as autonomous, rather than humanized or capitalized” (148) and the ideal portrait of anarchist social ecology that seeks “nonhierarchical relationships,” the allocation of resources seems to be extended to raise the quality of life as taxes are implemented and finance is redirected to common good such as universal healthcare and education (Robison 551). I would finally speculate that the fact the novel lies this ambiguously between the categories is Robinson’s way of articulating that change towards post-current-capitalist societies does not mobilize masses in one direction only, but in multiple. Hence, the reformation of capitalism is through radical ecology driven by inequalities suffered by the whole, which proves to be bigger than the sum of its parts in *New York 2140*.

IV. Conclusions

Robinson’s *New York 2140* criticizes capitalism in a unique and unparalleled way. Rather, than proposing the eradication of this ideology, it aims at a reformation through radical ecology. Moreover, Robinson works in a similar way in his most recent novel *The Ministry for the Future*. In an interview in *Outrage and Optimism*, he acknowledges the importance of

“escaping the lock that neoliberal capitalism seems to have on the world order and our lives, a lock that has a very simple rubric: nothing matters but profit... and human lives and the biosphere are sacrificed to the highest greater return” (42:45-43:09). The present analysis suffices to assert that his vision for such a novel is also present in *New York 2140* since he is also portraying an alternative sidestep to the ongoing capitalist system. Even when *New York 2140* may be more futuristic and ‘utopian’ than *The Ministry for the Future*, both novels converge at the perceived necessity for imagining what a ‘post-capitalist future’ looks like (44:37). These imaginary projections are what Robinson calls ‘improvisations of capitalism’ (46:43-46:48); thus, there is not a reason to doubt that envisioning the reformation of capitalism through radical ecology is a move that aligns with his quest of proposing a functional “political economy.” On a last note, while I initially regarded the novel to be about the transformation of a vertical, elite system into a *circular* one in which resources would be better allocated and there would be sustainability achieved by more egalitarian ethic of care (perhaps one aligned with deep ecology), this is not really the case. As a matter of fact, my perspective changed upon hearing Robinson’s commentary on vertical capitalism: “capitalism is a system of power relations. It’s not an economic system; it’s a power system in which the few exploit and overdetermine the lives of the many who often are in the precariat and suffering whereas a small minority of people are garnering the huge majority of profits made by the system” (50:00-50:21). Further, he expands on the achievements of progressive taxation, which is also proposed at the end of the *New York 2140*. He states that what should be looked for is a “horizontalization of economic power and of adequacy for all” (51:26-51:31). For these reasons, I realize that a working model of transformation for the novel is actually one where vertical economy is transformed into horizontal economy wherein certain capitalistic tendencies are kept as the focus of that transformation is homocentric and not biocentric. This, of course, has been argued as such.

Throughout this thesis, I have shown why *New York 2140* represents a reformation of capitalism through a search for Merchant’s ‘radical ecology.’ I have identified factors that create resilience to in-text New Yorkers in the face of climatic changes for both New York and the MetLife building, and I have expanded on how a communitarian sense is built and reinforced by the threats to life pushing the characters to evaluate the exigence of a radical ecology. In regards to finance, I have suggested capitalistic expressions that, though still capitalistic, signify deep commitments to the defense and maintenance of life such as Franklin’s eelgrass project and his

perspective change in the (il)liquid shift. I have similarly pointed out that while a better resource allocation is achieved in the novel, some problems and tendencies of capitalism survive its reformation such as Stefan and Roberto oceanic digging and Amelia's body sexualization. Finally, I have shown how the novel works capitalism's own mechanism against itself to propose a radical ecology that does not necessarily fall into scholarly-established categories, but rather is a mixture of working components of social, state-socialism, and deep ecology. In so doing, I have answered the questions of (1) how does a sense of community help reform capitalism; (2) how are finance and eco-sensitivity juxtaposed in the novel and what such a juxtaposition tell the readers about the transformation of capitalism. My analysis shows that for Robinson capitalist reform requires synergistic work of community, finance and eco-sensitivity.

But *New York 2140* is an enormously complex novel, and there are several aspects that I have not been able to cover here. For example, this analysis has left outside the character Inspector Gen, along with Mutt & Jeff, a pair of kidnapped coders that go missing at the beginning of the novel. Examining them could sustain a further aspect in arguing the banalization of life and the strife of private traders to keep a system running at the expense of others' lives. Similarly, in the look of a bigger, cross-text analysis, one could investigate the authorial imaginary possibilities of Cli-Fi by comparing the inhabitation of New York City in the face of climate change and a wider critique of capitalism in both *New York 2140* and Nathaniel Rich's *Odds Against Tomorrow*, for example, as the latter also interacts with the threats of a hurricane, the publicness of a sense of emergency and the private and public dichotomy. Furthermore, I have also not been able to take Sidney I. Dobrin's *Blue Ecocriticism and the Oceanic Imperative* into consideration since it was published too late for the timing of this analysis. Yet, such literature may aid future research on *New York 2140* by more deeply analyzing it from a blue humanities point of view. As for now, it has been acknowledged that Robinson's novel partly belongs to the 'oceanic turn;' thus, it is part of blue ecocriticism.

Finally, it is essential to note the diverse factors that are depicted as making the plan work. While every character here analyzed has a different drive towards the reformation of capitalism, the convergence of these drives is the real agent of causing sea change. In the chapter on community, I argued that the environmental peril and injustices suffered as a communitarian whole help unite the characters under the roof of the MetLife building. Furthermore, Franklin's realization that meaning may be found by embedding it the protection of buildings endorse the

theme of the commons being a sign of life and something that must be protected. Finally, Amelia's animal advocacy shows that a change in economy and a change in finance are not enough: change must also be accompanied by an increased environmental sensitivity. As this analysis concludes, having in mind Merchant's words on quest for a 'viable world' is essential:

People working together can create opportunities to keep their own environments clean and remove neighborhood poverty. But a world in which there is no room for both humans and wildlife cannot be achieved by biological methods or social programs alone. . . . through carefully crafted local programs, a synthesis of progressive politics and social ecology could contribute to a viable world (134).

While it is clear that Robinson's novel addresses more prominently a homocentric end, *New York 2140* is about the convergence of community, finance, and eco-sensitivity for if New York is about a struggle to survive, all life must emerge from this submerged, Anthropocene metropolis.

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